



The Abrams Agenda



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Let's Talk Trash

We produce about 1.8 million tons of residential and commercial garbage a year in Palm Beach County, and how we handle it is changing dramatically! The long awaited new waste-to-energy (WTE) facility celebrated its first firing of solid waste this past February. The WTE is on schedule to be fully operational in the next few weeks. Approved by the Board of County Commissioners in 2011, and under construction since 2012, the \$670 million facility is considered one of the most advanced and cleanest waste-to-energy power plants in North America. It will turn more of our trash into electricity, and make PBC a national leader in renewable energy.

Currently, SWA operates a waste-to-energy plant adjacent to the new one, which is currently producing and selling power to Florida Power and Light for an estimated 40,000 homes and businesses. In 2014, the SWA made about \$21 million from selling electricity from the existing trash burning operation. With the new facility coming online, trash burning revenues are projected to increase to nearly \$40 million! Eventually, it will have the capacity to process 3,000 tons of garbage per day which is equivalent to over 1 million tons per year.

In addition to a generating an excellent return on our investment in revenue, this state-of-art facility will produce clean energy for years to come, and will have a smaller impact on the environmental than most other sources of electricity. The Environmental Protection Agency considers waste-to-energy one of the most clean, reliable and renewable energy sources. For example:

- Air pollution control technologies that make it virtually impossible to detect any smell or visible smoke when the garbage is being burned
- Ash generated by the burning takes up much less room than garbage, resulting in a 90% reduction in use of the landfill
- A separate sorting facility that produces over 30,000 tons of recycled, sellable steel, aluminum, copper and other metals annually
- A comprehensive water conservation and recycling system that includes a unique rainwater collection system will provide a substantial portion of the process water necessary to operate the facility.

Another terrific component of the new WTE plant is the Education Center that will provide school children and other visitors the opportunity to tour the facility. Visitors will have access to interactive educational programs that will detail the intricate process that takes place from the moment the trucks dump the garbage into the pit through various phases such as recycling, sorting and burning.

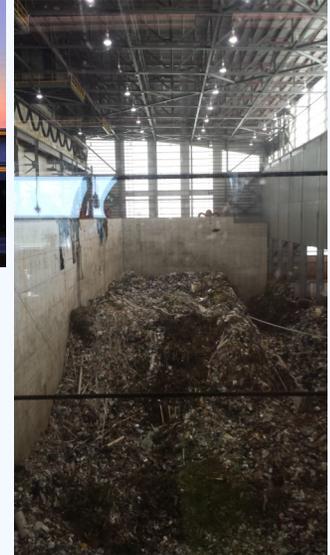
For anyone interested in obtaining more information or scheduling a tour, please feel free to contact my staff at 561-355-2204. This is a project that I am particularly proud to be a part of because it will benefit the residents of Palm Beach County for generations to come!



PBC Renewable Energy Facility 2 at dusk



The new Visitor's Center



First stop! The "pit" is where all the regular garbage gets dumped.

Recycling: How it's changing.

More than 8.9 billion pounds of materials such as metals, plastic and paper products have been recycled through the SWA over the past 13 years generating \$122 million in revenue. The county has also shared \$7.5 million of these funds with partnering municipalities through its Recycling Revenue Share Program. While incoming tonnages have not declined, items such as newspapers, plastic bottles and aluminum cans are producing less material per unit. Bottles and cans are lighter in weight and newspaper readership is at an all time low. For example, the newsprint collected has declined 50 percent since 2000, the amount of plastic per bottle is down 58 percent since 2005, and the amount of aluminum per can has declined 35 percent since 1998.

Additionally, the selling prices for these items have steadily decreased over the years. The SWA collects about 2.2 billion pounds of paper a year, which sold for up to \$100 per ton in the past. Today, paper is selling for approximately \$60 per ton and cardboard for approximately \$90 per ton.

Currently, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection reports that Palm Beach County recycles only about 56 percent of its trash, which is below the state's 75 percent recycling goal that counties are required to meet by 2020. While it is important that everyone continue to recycle using their blue and yellow bins, any recyclable product disposed of in the regular garbage stream can now be recycled into energy in the new incinerator. The SWA staff anticipates that the additional renewable energy generated at the new facility will enable the county to eventually exceed the state's 75 percent recycling requirement by 5 percent.