

**Custer County Commissioners
Public Hearing Minutes
Solid Waste Fee Proposed Increase
August 5, 2025**

The Public Hearing was Called to Order at 6:05 p.m. in the Community Event Center by Vice Chair Commissioner Will Naillon. The proceedings were recorded.

Those attending were: Commissioner Will Naillon, Commissioner Gordon Vaden, Deputy Clerk Tina Hawkins. Those in the audience were Myla Naillon, Wendell Gohn, Lisa Gohn, Karla Bankhead, Pat Bricker, Ron Bricker, James Savaria, Bill Ebberts, Becky Bailey, Kerri Evans, Bruce Evans, Dan Woolley, Cliff Hansen, Levi Mitchell, Todd Adams, Tracy Barrett, Lynn McBride, Claudia Whitten, Tanya Corrigan, Dan Corrigan, Bill ???, Anna Means, Cherlyn Reynolds, and Lisa Benson. Commissioner Randy Corgatelli was unable to attend due to a conflict in schedules.

The proposed fee increase will be as follows;

Currently Base/Range Residential is \$25/Commercial \$50 – increase Residential to \$100 and Commercial as follows;

#1 – Small/Up to 3 cans/week	\$350 /year Smaller businesses such as small offices, coffee shops, etc.
#2 – Medium/Up to 6 cans or 1 dumpster per week	\$700/year Medium sized businesses such as gas stations, supply stores, small motels, small Multi-housing units.
#3 – Large/Up to 12 cans or 2 dumpsters	\$1400/year Large businesses such as larger motels, liquor stores, large condominium complexes, etc.
Special* Compactor(s) Based on tonnage	Special Assessment Businesses with compactors, Such as large grocery stores.

The hearing opened with a presentation on the history of solid waste in Custer County provided by Commissioner Naillon. The past 20 years have seen only one \$5.00 increase in the solid waste annual fee. It was set at \$20.00 in 2004 with a \$5.00 increase coming in 2019 and has remained at \$25.00 per household per year to the present time. Past Commissioners have looked into many possibilities such as a solid waste power generation system. But it was shown that there was not enough waste to keep it operating. As the finances grew tighter services had to be dropped. The Stanley solid waste transfer site has been closed for the past two years. We just reopened it in June 2025. Commissioner Naillon has been researching solid waste options with the Dept. of Environmental Quality for the past year. He has also toured solid waste sites in Idaho and Montana. His research has shown that you have to balance your services with the income generated by solid waste.

There are two types of solid waste systems; Equitable or Convenient. The Custer County is set up as an equitable system with the user paying by the volume of waste they produce. A convenience system is simpler (fewer weigh ins) but more expensive. The current Custer County system requires payment to the county of an annual fee that supports the required solid waste infrastructure. You also pay by the ton, for the amount and type of waste you

generate to Blue Mountain Refuse. These payments cover the cost that is incurred for picking up and hauling of waste to the Lemhi Co. landfill. Naillon then went over the fees charged by similar size counties within Idaho, with the lowest annual fee at \$102.00 and the highest annual fee at \$281.40 per household.

Currently Custer County collects around \$97,000 per year in solid waste fees. Of this total we pay \$54,000 to Blue Mountain Refuse for the contract we have with him to operate three solid waste collection sites in the county. Challis, Mackay and East Fork. Two years ago, he let the Commissioners know that he could no longer manage the Stanley site due to the disparity between expenses and income generated by the site. Currently over \$100,000 is paid annually to the Lemhi County Landfill for the solid waste that is taken there from Custer County. The major solid waste expenses that Custer County has paid in 2025 are; \$33,000 for needed repairs to the Challis site scale; \$42,000 for three 50-yard roll off containers to operate the Stanley site with; \$40,000 for a used 4X4 backhoe for the Stanley site; \$54,500 that is paid to Blue Mountain Refuse annually; \$30,000 to pay for the part time employees that are operating the Stanley site on Fridays. This does not include all the minor expenses such as signage, scale licensing fees, fuel and maintenance on equipment, building maintenance and utilities.

Future expenses that will need to be paid are; rebuilding the retaining wall for the ramp at the Stanley site; site fencing required by the DEQ; getting the Mackay solid waste transfer station and scale moved to the new location; completing the closure process for the old Mackay solid waste site; keeping the Challis site operational. We do not have enough available funding to accomplish these needs for the county.

You ask why we don't have a landfill in Custer County? Naillon has talked with both Lemhi and Butte Co. landfill operators and it costs over a million dollars per year to operate a landfill. This is not a landfill that requires "lined cells", as they cost over \$3.5 million to build. We just cannot afford a landfill and will continue to establish "transfer sites". My research has discovered there are 76 waste-energy plants within the USA. Most are on the east coast. Custer County doesn't generate enough solid waste to keep a plant operating, although I feel they are a great idea.

The Public Hearing was opened for questions from the audience.

Cliff Hansen stated he want to see the "equitable system" continued in Custer County. He asked how much we pay per ton in Lemhi County? Custer Co. pays \$52.00 per ton of solid waste. He then shared that the Board of Commissioners had looked at a landfill site out by Spar Canyon years ago.

Anna Means asked; Why did you re-open the Stanley site? Will responded; the Stanley residents pay about 75% of the property taxes collected by Custer County. They deserve garbage service just like everyone else. Anna clarified that they only pay \$25.00 per household, just like Challis and Mackay. The County is mandated by law to provide waste services to all residents, hence the "Rural Drop Box" solid waste site in the Stanley area. She then asked what do you need all the increased fee revenue for? The Mackay solid waste site needs to be moved and new infrastructure built there, as well as keeping the other sites operational.

Claudia Whitten stated that the H.U.B. thrift store is caught in the middle. They are a non-profit but have people bringing "trash" that has to be put into their dumpster. They end up having to have the dumpster emptied twice a week, putting them into the Large Commercial bracket. As

the garbage costs go up, this problem will only get worse. The proposed commercial solid waste fees recommended by Great West Engineering were then discussed.

Dan Corrigan expressed his shock over the amount of increase in commercial fees. He asked the Board to be SURE that any funds collected show up quickly in improvements. Anna Means echoed his sentiments.

Karla Bankhead inquired why they were considering such a huge increase all at once? Couldn't it be spread out over time?

Cliff Hansen requested that they keep it "fair" and residents only pay for what they produce.

Anna Means requested the Board to provide a long-term plan on just what improvements are being done. Then adjust the fees up to cover the expenses in incremental amounts to cover the costs.

Cliff Hansen asked how close will the fees collected at the Stanley site come to covering the costs of operating the site? He didn't think it would even cover the payroll.

Anna Means stated that the increase is just too high to fast.

Will Naillon responded that waiting for 20 years to do an increase was not a sensible plan.

Gordon Vaden stated that if the Board could find any other way to keep the solid waste system going, they would do it.

Becky Bailey asked if there were any grants available for solid waste systems? Will responded that in a nut shell – NO.

Tracy Barrett stated that she wanted to see smaller increases with transparency about where and how the funds are being spent.

Cliff Hansen asked if this fee increase can be put on next years tax assessment notices? Will was not sure, but would be if possible.

Conversation moved to keeping the overhead to a minimum. Will had learned that the cost of installing a trash compactor that would make hauling much more affordable is around \$1.3 million dollars. It would reduce the transportation costs for the county.

Public Hearing adjourned at 7:28 P.M.



Lura H. Baker

Attest: Clerk, Lura H. Baker

Will Naillon
Vice Chairman, Will Naillon