

New Yorktown garbage deal brings \$1 million saving to town

Competition, move to curb mob influence credited with reducing the costs

HEATHER SALERNO

The Journal News

YORKTOWN — Town officials will approve a new residential garbage contract tonight with a local hauler that will save taxpayers nearly \$1 million in annual fees.

The bid will be awarded to Allied Waste Systems, a company that last year bought Briarcliff Manor-based Hudson Waste Haulage, the same business Yorktown has been using to pick up household trash and recycled materials for almost two decades.

But after hiring a Scarsdale consulting firm in November to tighten contract requirements and aggressively pursuing bids from competitors, the Town Board was able to secure a two-year deal at a significantly lower cost.

"The bid came in at much less, but for the same amount of work," town Supervisor Linda Cooper said. "In this case, competition certainly made for a lower price."

The revised garbage contract also eliminates an "escalating clause" that gradually increases the hauling company's payment by a certain percentage each year, Cooper said.

Under the new version, Allied will be paid \$1,973,832 for each year of its contract. Previously, Hudson's charges had increased annually until reaching a cost of

\$2,956,890 for its work this year.

That drop translates to almost \$100 in yearly savings for most of the garbage district's 12,000 residents, reducing a flat rate of \$386 to \$291 per household.

Yorktown's success foreshadows the implementation of a new county law designed to regulate trash hauling and increase competition, Westchester legislators say.

The measure, which was passed by the county Board of Legislators in August, is an attempt to clean up the longtime mob domination of the industry. It strengthens licensing rules for haulers, requiring extensive background checks and prohibiting those with a criminal record or ties to organized crime from doing business in the county. A new licensing commission will oversee the law.

But most important, the law will help lower garbage hauling bills by breaking up the stranglehold held by individual companies, said Legislator Thomas Abinanti, D-Greenburgh, head of the county board's Legislation Committee.

"Yorktown is proof that our approach on competition will save taxpayers money," Abinanti said. "It's evidence of what we've been talking about. Once haulers lose their fear of doing business in Westchester, prices will drop."

Cooper said Yorktown re-evaluated its garbage contract independently of the board's actions, although town officials were

aware and supportive of the county's efforts. Board members also plan to ask Great Forest Inc., the town's garbage consultant, to study automated waste systems, another potentially bill-slashing measure suggested by a New Jersey hauling company.

"They will study this to see if it can bring the cost down even further for some homeowners in town," Cooper said.