

Summary of Cedar Lane's dumpster service and various alternatives

The size and costs associated with current Tonnadoonah dumpster service for community rubbish removal based to a significant degree on the actual volume of waste generated. Such a system would fairly consider both the size of a dwelling and the established usage pattern (meaning seasonal cottage, year-round cottage or homestead). Neither of these factors are considered for Tonnadoonah's dumpster service. Homestead residents and cottage residents with larger home generate significantly more refuse than seasonal cottage owners and others with smaller cottages. Waste Management offers seasonal service that can be started and stopped throughout the year. WM also offers numerous different sizes and costs for different service needs. Tonnadoonah does not, and I feel such consideration is overdue.

I propose a system that would take both house size and 3 usage groupings into consideration. I created a simple numerical model that accomplishes that. Implementing such a system would require people to pay in some proportion to the volume of waste generated, and so the relative cost for the service. There is a precedent for doing this in that the service Tonndoonah provides is actually a combination of two services – the weekly trash removal, and also a non-standard bulky item disposal that most always comes with a pay per use fee arrangement.

Changing to a differentiated system may well be unpopular with some (or even most) residents, so I realize that serious consideration for any such a system is unlikely, but I felt obligated to propose a solution to a situation that I see as being problematic. Conversely, it also appears that there is no easy solution for the high level of demand/usage that the Tonnadoonah dumpster situation seems to have generated. It seems that many residents appreciate the excess capacity that generally exists at all but the peak usage periods as it affords them with a lot of room for bulky item disposal – and with no per usage fee - but at an annual cost is born by the entire community.

Property taxes for public school funding vs Tonnadoonah dues – it's not the same thing!

Some have compared a uniform fee as is used for Tonnadoonah dues to property tax based support for public schools, which are paid by everyone whether they have kids or not. This is a non-sequitur and a big one. For starters, property taxes ARE differentiated – by property value. Further, Tonnadoonah's trash collection service is not a public service. Private schools don't charge fees to people who don't attend. And in fact some public schools systems offer vouchers for parents who choose to send their kids to a private school. But mostly Cedar Lane is a private community of 24, not one of thousands, so usage and cost differentiation could be done.

If the community chooses not to, that's fine as there are some good reasons to maintain status quo, and the system can keep leaning on the little guys to help cover the costs for the bigger users, which is what is occurring. As the current dues structure stands, the amount of money per year is rather small, so it's not a big deal, but it adds up, and as someone who has been scrutinized and publicly castigated, I no longer want to be a part of the current system.

Hal Wolff; May 15, 2023

Proposal to Create Tonnadoonah a “Dumpster Club” (similar to the Sewar Assoc.)

Background: The current trash removal service is mandatory with a uniform rate based on aggregate usage & cost. The “one size fits all” price works, but doesn’t account for differences between part-time or full-time residents or for different sized houses that generate a higher or lower volumes of waste. As things stand, those residents that have smaller places or visit less often (or recycle more) effectively subsidize the service fee for higher volume users. Further, dumpster service is offered to other permanent residents outside the Cedar Lane Community – again, partially funded by lower-end cottage users.

Improvements? I believe a more equitable system based on actual usage can be created. I am proposing a fairly simple system that would strive to be fair to everyone. Given that people outside of community are also being provided with dumpster service, I feel that adds further incentive to create a price structure that takes into account household size and the relative amount of time spent living on the lake. In my opinion, by considering those two variables, an equitable, usage-based system would result.

Proposed method: create a simple household specific numerical size factor using the number of bathrooms. (Note: half baths and full baths would all count the same.) That number would then be multiplied by one of 3 different **residency status usage factors**, which are suggested as **1.0 for regular (year-round) “cottage” owners** (most of the people on Cedar Lane – 18 of them); **0.75 for seasonal cottage owners** (I believe there are 3 of those); and **1.5 for permanent residents** (I believe there are also 3 of those). Other usage weighing factors could be considered, but this is what I recommend. (House size in Ft² vs bathroom count could be considered, but would be a bit more numerically complicated.)

Once the individual numerical factor is worked out for all of the dumpster club members, the total sum would be added up, and everyone would simply pay their % share of the total annual dumpster costs.

For example, if a regular year-round cottage owner had a full bath and two half baths, their numerical quotient would be $3 \times 1.0 = 3.0$. This would result in an ~annual service fee of \$280. (*See next page to see how that is calculated.*) Once any given individual numerical factor is established, that figure won’t change unless the house itself is expanded to add a new bathroom (or if the residency status changed).

Other rubbish removal options exist: there are other service options, such as individual WM trash service, or smaller private service providers that could be considered. Or in my case, as of 2022, I’ve been taking all my trash home with me, and I plan to continue to do that for the foreseeable future. (I’m told this practice is fairly common in many lakeside communities.)

Possible unintended consequences: It could also be that implementing a method such as this which would for the first time differentiate the fees for people who have traditionally a uniform rate may create a desire for some to maintain the status quo – especially for larger households whose fee is apt to increase. Personally, I feel this system would be quite simple to implement, would be fair to everyone - but everyone has a right to their opinion and to exercise their vote.

Note on size and usage factors: a size factor might potentially be “more accurate” based on actual square footage of a residence, or possibly by the total number of bedrooms (although what constitutes a bedroom can be very subjective and thus problematic), but the number of bathrooms is a simple (and unambiguous) proxy and keeps the numerical complexity to a minimum.

To summarize, I feel that the size and usage factors suggested represent a good faith attempt to create a system that would be fairly simple to create and be relatively fair to everyone, and would account for the fundamental usage differences among the 3 primary types of residents on the lane, and also for the large range of different house sizes on the lane and the different numbers of guests they tend to accommodate.

Possible outcome of this plan (with examples):

If the quotient total for all people in the community is 74.25, then a year-round cottage owner had a full bath and two half baths total portion of the community total would be $3/74 = 0.040$, or 4 % of the annual trash service fee. (Such percentages would change if people join or leave the club.) This results in a fairly simple solution that strives to be fair to everyone as it is based on household size & relative usage.

24 residents (or is it 25?) – not including the 6 participating non-community members

With a simple baseline assumption of 3 toilets per house on average (and this is only an assumption)

$18 \times 3 \times 1.0 = 54$ (regular (year-round) cottage residents)

$3 \times 3 \times 1.5 = 13.5$ permanent (homestead) residents)

$3 \times 3 \times 0.75 = 6.75$ (seasonal residents)

Total index sum = 74.25 (this is an estimate based on 24 residents)

If the current total annual dumpster service fee is \$7,000 for example,

Likely resulting annual fees for various residents would be:

For a regular (non-homestead) property owners (with 3 baths): 3×1.0 or ~4.0% of the total, or \$280

For a permanent (homestead) property owners with 3 baths: $3 \times 1.5 = 4.5$ or ~6.0% of the total or \$420
(This total simply 1.5 x the line above.)

For a seasonal cottage owners (with 3 baths): $3 \times 0.75 = 2.25$ or ~3.0% or \$210 (75% of the top line)

A 96-gallon container shed-based system could be created which would require building a simple “trash bin shed” up near Ferry Road, and all homestead residents could store a regular 96 gallon container there for standard weekly service, and there could also be some number of shared bins for other cottage owners, or possibly a single 8 yard dumpster for that would be serviced from May thru October. (There would likely be a need a few additional 96 gallon containers for winter needs of the various cottage goers, and possibly a special Holiday season dumpster load.) (FYI - servicing non-community members would not be recommended with this plan, but could be accommodated with the other plan proposed.)

Feel free to contact me with any questions, comments or suggestions.

-Hal Wolff (runlikehal@yahoo.com)