



February 2, 2017

**Open Letter to the Citizens of Summit County from County Manager Tom Fisher:**

Many citizens have contacted the County over the past month with concerns over the new County imposed solid waste collection fee. First, I want to apologize and take responsibility for any confusion that we caused through delayed billing, communication, and confusing language on the bill itself. Despite our efforts to reach the public through public hearings, radio service announcements, county website, social media, and print media, our message about this billing did not reach everyone. With that I would like to take this opportunity to describe what this fee is, why it has been implemented, and what you will see in the future from the County regarding garbage fee billing.

The County Council adopted a fee for solid waste collection for all dwelling units in the County in late 2015 as part of the 2016 budget process. The rising costs of collection, recycling, waste diversion and opening and closing of landfills have outpaced our ability to use traditional funding methods like property and sales taxes. In fact, the rates began to increase so rapidly the County Council found themselves contemplating reductions in services in other County functions in order to maintain the essential service of disposing of garbage and recycled materials. They chose to establish fees for this specific service instead of cutting necessary services elsewhere or raising general property taxes.

It is important to note that the fee does not replace property taxes used to fund solid waste. It was needed to supplement the already committed revenue to pay for the escalating costs of the program. In fact, most counties and municipalities charge for this service at a much higher rate in order to keep operations running. The solid waste collection fee at \$3 per month, is about 1/5 of what many Utah local governments charge for similar service.

After the Council adopted the new fee through the public process, we partnered with Republic Services to administer the billing on the County's behalf. No private information was provided to Republic other than the property owner name and address, which is public record. Through this initial billing, we discovered errors on our end. The language on the bill was confusing and referenced a 65 gallon container when it should have stated it was for the County's solid waste collection program. We also discovered that some undeveloped properties, or vacant lots, received a bill and do not generate trash or require hauling service from the County. Undeveloped properties (those without a permanent dwelling) are not subject to the new fee until developed. If you are an undeveloped lot owner and received a bill, please contact our Public Works Department at 435-336-3970 so we can correct this error.

Thank you to those who paid the 2016 bill in a timely manner. For those who have not yet paid, reminder bills for the 2016 fee will be sent by Republic Services. This second mailing will contain additional information about our solid waste program. The 2017 solid waste collection bill will be sent in July of this year and will also further communicate information about billing and solid waste services. We encourage you to outreach to myself or staff with any questions or concerns you may have regarding this topic or any other service the County provides. I can be reached at [countymanager@summitcounty.org](mailto:countymanager@summitcounty.org). Thank you.