

TRASH TO CASH

# FITTING THE BILL



## Landfill nearly doubles manpower

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The Marcellus Shale gas industry is bringing tremendous business to the Wayne Township Landfill at McElhattan - so much so that it has been able to stabilize rates, invest in expansion and fund various community-based initiatives. The story below is the second in a series of three articles aimed at informing our readers about the landfill's finances, its vision and plans for the future.

By **JIM RUNKLE**

[jrunkle@lockhaven.com](mailto:jrunkle@lockhaven.com)

**McELHATTAN** — The Wayne Township Landfill was looking for a few good men last December ... They found them in abundance at a special job fair and through a year-long concentrated effort to answer the growing

needs of the facility.

Anybody driving by the landfill should be aware the Marcellus Shale natural gas industry has created a booming business for the Clinton County Solid Waste Authority.

The authority responded to that situation by looking at its manpower

needs this year and into the foreseeable future.

Landfill Manager Jay Alexander looked over the figures recently with newly-hired Lisa Brown, who fills the position of human resources administrator, and determined from last year at this time, the landfill has hired 25 new employees, bringing its staff to 76 workers.

Alexander noted prior to this year, the landfill never felt the need for a

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human resources expert.

Some 19 new employees were added since November and last year at this time, the landfill had a staff of 43.

Alexander said in 2011 the authority budgeted \$2.7 million for payroll.

"The actual amount at the end of the year was \$3.4 million," he said. "And for 2012 we've budgeted \$4.1 million for payroll."

"We were just meeting out back and talking about where we are with our employees and tasks," Alexander said. "Right now, we are fully staffed with the possible exception of a maintenance technician."

According to Brown, the landfill's manpower demands were filled via a SWA-specific job fair in mid-December.

"That's something we never held before," she said. "We had 70 applications that day, and 30 more heard about the fair and submitted applications later. All the employees helped out with the skills tests for the heavy equipment."

Alexander said technical positions are especially critical given the type of heavy equipment being used at the landfill these days. He noted one bulldozer the authority acquired has nine individual computers to monitor maintenance and a highly-skilled expert at both mechanics and computers is required to keep up with repairs and diagnostics.

"We have some pretty good technicians and mechanics on staff, but everybody is looking for new hires these days," he said.

The reason for the upsurge in employment?

"It's almost entirely due to the increase in the gas industry," Alexander said. "We've more than doubled our sales and that's helped

us move up some of our long-term projects, which means we needed more people for those efforts ... The timing was perfect."

Ironically, the authority is in competition with its major customer, the gas industry, for the very type of worker it sought through its job fair, Alexander said.

"From full to part time, we have the same demands as the gas industry," Alexander said. "Every position is exactly what we have. Our board knows that, I know that and our employees know that. It's a different world today than it was five years ago, when we'd ask for drivers and get 40 applicants and 10 good guys. Today, it's four or five maximum."

"We are very pleased about the caliber of the people we've hired," Alexander added. "We hired employees who have hit the ground running."

"The management has taken on the task of expanding the life and capacity of the landfill," Solid Waste Authority Chairman James Maguire Sr. said. "We've also seen an increase in our volume. Instead of contracting out for these types of services and expansions, we're doing it with our own people, and we're creating a bunch of jobs in the process."

As for the competition for those jobs, Alexander said the landfill was able to offer the new workers several things they might not

find in a gas industry job — including a stable, weekly work schedule and a "family-oriented business."

He pointed to the odd work schedule the industry requires, which sometimes includes weeks of work before days of leisure, and 12-hour shifts or longer.

He said some employees with families appreciated a "daylight" job, Mondays through Fridays, 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

"The industry provides a large paycheck," Alexander said, "but it also makes large demands on a worker's time."

Board member Jeffrey Burnham said two factors are coming into play with the payroll and manpower increases — The expansion of the landfill under a new permit, and the increase in volume the landfill has seen in recent years.

"There are a large number of wells being drilled by the natural gas industry," Burnham said, "and that's producing larger quantities of waste ... what they call tailings. It isn't toxic, but does fall under environmental regulations requiring the use of a certified landfill."

"We can't take all the industry produces but we are taking some of it," Burnham added. "I've been on the board for eight or nine years, and I think we've almost doubled our personnel in that time. We were in the high 30s when I began and now we're in the low to middle 70s."