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Waste district refunding \$150k surplus

By Keith Whitcomb Jr. Staff Writer

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The local solid waste district will refund \$150,000 to its member towns.

Mark Shea, district manager of the Rutland County Solid Waste District, said in an interview Thursday the \$150,000 is a budget surplus accumulated over a period of years. He said the district Board of Supervisors voted to refund the surplus to member towns based on their populations.

According to draft minutes of the board's Dec. 4 meeting, five board members voted "yes" to refund the surplus, while four voted "no."

Voting "yes," according to the draft minutes, were Tim Gilbert, of Castleton, Bill Gillam, of Rutland City, Bob Bixby, of Clarendon, Larry Taggart, of Ira, and Clint Wooley, of Mount Holly. Voting "no" was Gabe McGuigan, of Brandon, Carrie Dougherty, of Proctor, Paul Donaldson, of Poultney, and Nancy Gaudreau, of Pittsford.

Shea said the crux of the debate as to how to handle the surplus was essentially between those who thought it best to provide some rate-relief to member towns, and those who thought it would be better to save it for future capital expenses.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime thing, I think," he said. "We've done well with being fiscally conservative and watching our pennies."

Shea said he has recommended that towns use their surplus refunds on infrastructure and maintenance, as these elements don't get cheaper over time.

The checks only just went out, according to Shea, meaning not all town leaders have had a chance to discuss how to use the funds.

John Haverstock, town manager of Pittsford, said Thursday the refund to the town was news to him, and it would be up to the Select Board as to how the windfall might be addressed, but it's possible the funds will be applied to a recent roofing project at the town transfer station.

Haverstock said the town spent \$14,500 to repair a leaky roof where transfer station personnel work, and to extend the roof over the trash compactor. The hope with the latter is the compactor will work better when it's under cover, and that trash will be drier, meaning it will weigh less and therefore cost less when disposed of.

In Brandon, Select Board Chairman Seth Hopkins said Town Manager David Atherton told the board about the pending refund, but the board hasn't yet had the time to discuss it. He said the funds might be used to offset the town's expenses with regards to the seizure of 220 farm animals from a property on Kimball Road on Jan. 31, in connection with a cruelty to animals case.

Hopkins said the town is financially responsible for the animals during the period between when they were seized and when the owner surrendered them, about five days. He didn't have a cost estimate Thursday, but it's definitely an unplanned expense.

In Clarendon, Town Treasurer Heidi Congdon said the refund to the town was added to the transfer station expenses fund and will be used to offset the cost of running it.

The largest refund by far, \$50,608, went to Rutland City. Mayor David Allaire said Thursday the Board of Aldermen's representative to the solid waste district, Gillam, informed the board of the refund, but there's not yet been any talk of how it might be used.

According to Shea, the refunds were as follows: Brandon, \$13,220; Castleton, \$14,134; Clarendon, \$8,663; Danby, \$4,103; Hubbardton, \$2,280; Ira, \$1,368; Killington, \$3,647; Mendon, \$4,103; Mount Holly, \$4,103; Mount Tabor, \$456; Pittsford, \$9,574; Poultney, \$10,030; Proctor, \$5,471; Rutland City, \$50,608; West Rutland, \$7,295; Wallingford, \$7,295; and Wells, \$3,647.

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