
KENT COUNTY NEWS RELEASE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS



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Recycling on the Rise in Kent County

GRAND RAPIDS – Residents in Kent County are recycling more than ever before. In 2013, the Department of Public Works (DPW) Recycling and Education Center took in a record amount of more than 30,500 tons of waste: that’s more than 61 million pounds! From that, the center was able to process 28,351 tons of recyclables, and sell 25,142 tons to vendors, bringing in more than \$2.5 million in revenue. The facility has seen an increase of 7-10% a year in waste every year since opening the doors in 2010, and the amount of recycled material has grown each year as well.

Today, the Kent County Board of Commissioners voted to hire an additional Maintenance Technician to meet the growing demands of the center.

The Kent County Recycling & Education Center is a single-stream recycling facility. Previously, customers were required to keep paper plastic, metal, and glass all separated. This facility uses state-of-the-art technology, utilizing “single stream recycling” where items get separated. “When we built, we knew it would increase our productivity, and hoped it would serve as a regional plant,” said Dennis Kmiecik, the Solid Waste Operations Division Director for the DPW. “Back in October, the Recycling and Education Center implemented a second shift to accommodate increased demand.”

Dennis says a combination of factors have helped the center: more people concerned about being environmentally friendly, and awareness. “In addition to processing goods, the Education Center has tripled the number of tours we provide for students who learn more about recycling,” said Dennis. “They go home and tell their parents what they’ve learned. Awareness has really increased.”

When the facility was constructed in 2010, the DPW operated with one Maintenance Technician, because the equipment was new, but the equipment manufacturer recommends two technicians. The equipment now requires more maintenance as it continues to age. Today, the Kent County Board of Commissioners voted to add an additional Maintenance Technician. The added position will be funded partly by savings in overtime hours currently worked to meet the recycling facility’s maintenance needs; the rest will come from the DPW’s solid waste operations, which are self-supporting and not supported by tax revenues.

For more information, contact the Kent County Department of Public Works at (616) 336-4369 or go to www.recyclekent.org.

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