

Subject: Support Letter for Curbside pickup of Compostable Waste and
Recommendations from the Scarsdale Conservation Advisory Council-CAC)

Dear Mayor Hochvert:

As 2017 comes to a close, I look back and see this as the year I learned about my garbage. I am now connected to the trash I create. I have become an active participant in the disposal process of my garbage. Composting has made for cleaner living in our house, in our community, and, hopefully, in our county as other municipalities see the success of the Scarsdale composting program and replicate a version of it for their communities. This program has enlightened me and given me a new lens to view our planet. I want to continue to live in a more sustainable and environmentally respectful way.

Also, in 2017, I had my first big health challenge to navigate. Fortunately, I came through it beautifully. Although the doctors thankfully knew how to treat my diagnosis, they do not know its cause. One possible cause my doctor mentioned was environmental. This was a wake up call for me.

I stumbled upon composting. I have been recycling for years but hadn't gone much beyond the cardboard and the bottles. In the beginning of 2017, I was dropping off cardboard boxes at the recycling center which coincided with the start of the composting program. I had read about the program in the Scarsdale Inquirer and I thought, what the heck, I will give it a try. I purchased the kit. Great decision. The composting kits were well organized and the instructions clear. Learning how to compost was easy. We did have to train ourselves and work out our own family system but in a few weeks we were up and running. We are a household of 3-5 (two kids are already out of the house). My kids were resistant at first but when they saw I was serious about composting, they got with the program. I get great joy when I see my kids scrape their plates into the compost container.

Also, in 2017, when signing up for the SHS PTA, on the volunteer form I checked

off Sustainability Committee and that was another good decision because I got to meet Michelle Sterling and Ron Schulhof. I can't write this letter of support for the CAC recommendations without a commendation for Michelle and Ron. I didn't know either of them prior to my involvement in the Sustainability Committee. Scarsdale is lucky that these two individuals chose to settle here. Their intentions and commitment to improving the environment are sincere. They are achieving this goal, one household, one school, one community, one county at a time. Their approach to these environmental issues is thoughtful, intelligent, and well researched. Their solutions are filled with common sense. Their attitude is positive and solution oriented. They have a keen ability to work within the resources and infrastructure Scarsdale already has in place and they are team and consensus builders.

The current composting program is an excellent example of what I described, The beauty of the composting program is that it is not complex. All of the components to make the program work are not complicated, the materials are not expensive, no high tech technology is needed. The program is a smart use of existing resources and infrastructure and it's easy to learn how to compost. From my vantage point, it seems to have been a wonderful collaboration between the Village and a volunteer committee.

In the 11 months that I have been composting, our household trash has been reduced greatly. Often on Mondays, I have only 1 trash bag. On the second trash pickup day, I have 1 bag but could easily wait for the following week collection. This is a critical point. I think that as more households sign on for composting, the trash pick up will decrease and allow the Village to reallocate resources and have scheduled curbside compost pick-ups. I know the Village has often discussed reducing trash pickup to once a week and I was horrified by this thought and envisioned a smelly garage that would be piled up with garbage. Now that I compost, I see that a once a week pickup is absolutely achievable. I am often looking for garbage to throw out for the second pick up. Our trash bins hardly smell now as all the food waste is now composted.

I look over at our neighbor's house on trash pickup day and I can tell they don't compost. I see that they have multiple trash cans brimming over with their garbage and they often leave additional bags on the side. It's a mess. I purchased two bins but since I began composting, I only leave one bin out each pick-up. When you

sort your garbage, your garbage becomes much cleaner and more manageable and also not as much of a mystery.

As a member of the Sustainability Committee, Michelle and Ron asked if I would be a trash monitor at the high school as the high school implemented its composting program this fall. To educate and successfully implement the program, Ron and Michelle said it's critical to have a person standing by the trash cans to help prompt and remind the students, lunch aides, and custodial staff to sort their trash. They say it takes months to get your brain to remember to sort. Ron and Michelle have been monitoring the high school trash 11:45-1:15 since September. I was happy to help them out. The work isn't glamorous but I have enjoyed watching the high school students go up the learning curve and become composters. The custodial staff has embraced the program too. The custodians have told me that managing the garbage in the cafeteria has become easier, more organized, and less of a mess for them.

Disposing of my compost is somewhat easy for me as I don't work and can make it to the recycle center during its business hours. Also, I am very committed to the program. However, that said, there have been many times this year that getting from my neighborhood (Fox Meadow) to Secor Rd was like doing an obstacle course with road closures, repairs, and high traffic volume. Scarsdale has old infrastructure and road repairs is the new normal as the village tries to repair and upgrade an aging infrastructure. Many times, I wanted to abort the trip but I persevered. Sometimes I take advantage of the Saturday hours which is an excellent option for families with two working adults in the household.

However, life is busy for people here in Scarsdale and human nature likes tasks to be easy and if disposing of the compost is too burdensome, people just won't do it. The disposal issue is the biggest reason I hear why people do not want to sign on to this program. With almost a year under our belt and over 1000 households participating, I think we are now at a point with the program where it's time to expand and to try and implement a curbside pick up.

I think as the Sanitation Department continues to weigh and monitor compost, trash, and recyclables, they will see that the trash will decrease and that offering

curbside pick-up for composting is just a reassignment of resources rather than an extra expenditure. I also think curbside pickup will bring this program to the next level and will help achieve the critical mass needed to open a composting facility in Westchester.

My son, who is now 22 and a graduate of SHS Class of 2013, is a software engineer and has moved to California. He is a forwarding thinking guy. When we discuss issues of concern to him and his generation, he says it's the environment. He says that there are places on this earth that will no longer be inhabitable within his lifetime. The environmental catastrophes of 2017 seem to be proving that inhabitability is already beginning to happen. Sadly, the clock has run out. We must tackle these environmental issues more aggressively.

This Thanksgiving my sister and I started to work towards making our Thanksgiving a zero waste event. We are far from there yet, however, we did set up cans for compostable waste. This was a great start and a great message to send to the future generations. We hope to improve our waste management each year.

Honestly, I am proud to be living in the one community in Westchester County that has a village wide composting program. I was born and raised in Scarsdale (SHS Class of '82), I chose to move back here in the early 90s to raise my family. My parents have been living here since 1964, and my sister and her family have been living here since 1990. We have a long history here. Scarsdale has always been a community that is open to change and trying new things. In public education, Scarsdale has always been forward thinking and a leader. The creation of the Alternative School is an excellent example of this forward thinking. I could cite so many more examples. On the environmental front, Scarsdale is being a leader with the implementation of this composting program and a good county citizen by sharing this program with other towns and villages in the county. We all win when this happens.

In January, the Village Composting Program will be having its first anniversary. This program is ready to take the next step which is to offer curbside pick up. The program has momentum; it's the right time. The composting program is a ray of sunshine and hope in a year that seemed to have a black cloud hovering. Please support the CAC recommendations.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my letter. Thank you so much for evaluating and considering this important community issue.

Thank you for volunteering to be our mayor.

Respectfully,

Susan M. Morse