

January 22, 2013

Closure of Blair Convenience Center

The closing of the Blair Convenience Center noted at the Roane County Commission meeting in January showed my lack of political experience and knowledge of politics. Prior to the Blair Convenience Center closing our office reviewed reports, evaluated service, studied the financial impacts and discussed the closure of the Blair Convenience Center for over a year with our Commission. No maliciousness was intended to any individuals or groups of the Blair Community. We did not evaluate the impact of votes gained or, in this case, votes lost. We made a recommendation based on sound business practices and the evolution of the Roane County solid waste service operations. I apologize for any hardship or inconvenience this closing may have caused.

In the 1960's and prior, we disposed of our waste in ditches, on the side of the road, and in outhouses just to name a few. In the 1970's we purchased 6-cubic-yard green boxes and placed them in many locations around the county. In the 1980's the 6-cubic-yard green boxes were consolidated into what we call convenience centers and many call inconvenience centers, a fenced-in area with an attendant. The solid waste program continues to evolve with changes in laws that required reduction of the disposed waste, thus recycling has become a large focus of the service. Further, due to improvements in compactors and the high cost of transportation, 40-yard compactors operated by electricity or solar power came into use where compaction of garbage increases the tonnage we can haul and thus reduces cost.

The state of evolution we currently are in consists of developing super centers, which includes potential consolidation of centers, recycling, installing compactors, and eliminating 6-cubic-yard boxes.

It is not outside the realm of possibility that one day we will do door-to-door collection, a concept discussed by former Oak Ridge Commissioner Robert Peelle in the 1980's, prior to implementation of convenience centers.

To my friends of the Blair Community I sincerely apologize for the lack of communication as we invested in the Clax Gap and Orchard View Convenience Centers and closed the Blair Center.

The considerations of closing the Blair Center were: large investments in the Clax Gap and Orchard View Centers, the county did not own the property, and the property was not large enough to become a super center. Once we discovered potential leaks from the collection boxes into Poplar Creek, we were obligated to take action.

Ron Woody