

October 12, 2007

Dear Editor,

In your editorial entitled "Some Monopolies are Necessary", you would have readers believe that only "some" of the Southeastern Public Service Authority's financial problems are of its own making.

The fact is that SPSA has for years ignored warnings from the business community that it was borrowing and spending too much and outsourcing too little. The result is the mammoth \$270-million debt the agency has accumulated (and must repay within 11 years) and the out of sight tipping fee of \$100/ton they have recently levied on most of their members. It's no wonder SPSA now wants those governments to force flow control on their local businesses. The promise of an immediate reduction from \$100-\$55/ton (and a commensurate rise for the private haulers) is enticing, but anyone who has followed SPSA's troubled history knows it will only be a matter of time before that levy creeps up again.

The solution to SPSA's problems is selling off assets and looking for others to take on functions it is incapable of furnishing at a profit. Did you know that Delaware, which has a statewide waste authority run by a board of business people, oversees all of that state's waste management functions with 13 employees because it contracts out services? SPSA, which is into empire building and wants to do everything itself, has 500 workers. Waste authorities on the Peninsula and in Central Virginia, which also outsource transportation and disposal, have 70 employees or less and little or no debt.

It's SPSA's model that's broken and needs to be fixed. It's not too late, but why should apartments, shopping centers and office tenants as well as public schools and other institutions that have their trash collected by private haulers be the ones who have to pay for all these mistakes? SPSA, which never has enough lobbyists and consultants, is working overtime to convince its eight member localities to approve flow control before the business community wakes up. The pressure worked with Isle of Wight County's Board of Supervisors. We are hoping other governing bodies will heed our concerns about giving SPSA monopolistic control over all waste disposal and the unchecked power that comes with it.

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