

Project: Trash Talk: Workers in Vermont's Changing Waste Management Industry  
Narrator: Amy McVey, Drop Off Center Operator and Facilities Assistant, Chittenden Solid Waste Management District  
Interviewer: Virginia Nickerson  
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Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

Nickerson: This is Ginger Nickerson and it is September 28, and I am interviewing Amy McVey at the Chittenden Solid Waste District offices in Williston, Vermont. So Amy, could you tell me just the place and year that you were born?

McVey: I was born in Rochester, New York in 1971.

Nickerson: And what is your current job and how long have you been in this line of work?

McVey: My current position is drop off center operator and facilities assistant, and I've been in this position 15 years. I started out as a drop off center operator like three days a week. And then I think a couple years in I created the facilities assistant position add-on and became fulltime. I think within two years.

Nickerson: And what do you do? I'm going to ask you to describe both positions.

McVey: Okay.

Nickerson: So which one do you want to describe first?

McVey: Well, since I started out in the field, we can start with that one. The drop off center operator position is at one of our drop off centers or at a facility. We operate drop off centers that are open to the general public where people do it themselves. They bring their own trash, recycling or oddball items that their trash hauler wouldn't pick up, like a couch or a TV. And I work with my coworkers and we basically manage all the waste, or the items to dispose of that people bring in.

And within that particular position, there's kind of two facets. There's the working inside in the attendant's booth where we basically welcome the customers and assess their load. We assess fees for certain items. Other items, we don't charge for. We answer quite a few questions. Then we send them on their way.

And then the other part of the position is out in the yard, out in the field, where you're actually interacting with the customers and sometimes you're helping them with their couch or a TV, or you're managing the items that they drop off, which they did their part, now we have to handle the waste from there. [unclear] package them from shipping outside.

So, it's a very active position. And you know, it was very appealing when I saw the job, the help wanted thing in the newspaper. I need physical labor as a portion of my work position. I

discovered it about twenty-some odd years ago, and I feel like I always need to be physically active in any job that I undertake. So I'm also shoveling snow, or mowing the lawn, or raking leaves. Anything to keep the facility looking good, and safe.

3:30

Nickerson: So can I ask what you were doing before you took the position, or some other jobs that you had had in your life before you—

McVey: Yeah. Well the one that tipped the scales into the physical labor realm was I did work for the National Park Service in the late '90s out west in Washington State. And I fell into the world of wildland firefighting. So that just kind of bye and bye, I initially started there as the North Cascades National Park as a volunteer. And with that, they gave me training for working in the wildland fire setting. And then a job eventually opened up. So I ended up doing that for three seasons. And really loved it. But then eventually moved back east where I came from. And settled in Vermont. And I worked on a farm one season. I really liked that. And then I got into the construction trade for a year to see if that was my thing. And I enjoyed everything I learned, but I realized that also is not totally my thing. But I did like the satisfaction I got from creating with my own hands.

And then basically that morphed into, once that wound down, I did see this job opening at solid waste district. And it really fit well with my overall approach in life is just trying to be minimalist, or at least being aware of what I consume. Of what happens to stuff when I don't want it anymore, and trying to reduce my impact, basically, on the environment and our society. So in college, I actually was one of five or so people who manually hand-sorted all the paper at our recycling. It was before recycling was institutionalized. So I finally came full circle. When I went to college in the '90s we also we transported our newspaper and our white office paper and our old-fashioned green bar paper to the Marcal recycling facility in northern Jersey, and we got a little money for it. (laughs) So yeah, it really seemed to fit.

Nickerson: So you had been recycling and separating recyclable materials before you started working at the drop off center.

6:27

McVey: Correct. This was in college when it was, as I said, not institutionalized yet. So our maintenance crew didn't do that. We basically took it upon ourselves in our little environmental club to put out bins. And we said that we would sort ourselves, which we did. I'm not quite sure what happened with all the containers and bottles and things like that, but our focus was on the paper. And maybe because it was easier to manage, less volume. I'm not quite sure how it all worked out. But it was quite an adventure, just sorting in an unheated garage space that we were allotted. So I feel very strongly about it.

And also how I grew up, we used every scrap of paper and the back side in my household. And we're pretty kind of thrifty. So it made logical sense to step into a paying

position where I could be in company with other people of like mind and, you know, are into recycling and source reduction, really, waste reduction.

Nickerson: Yeah. Did anything change for you in terms of how you handle waste or recyclables in your personal life after you started working at the drop off center? Were there ah-has?

McVey: Interesting. I felt like, I don't think there were any major changes. Because even before, even after I moved into Vermont, before I started the solid waste position, I did all our hotline, you know, as just a lay person resident. So I had made it a point to pretty well know what we were able to recycle or divert from trash.

One thing that did change is once I got into the solid waste profession is I realized my wanting to recycle every last scrap of paper and every little bit of plastic is not feasible. It might be great, it's a great goal. But the reality of the industry is there's conveyor belts. And it's not every single scrap 100 percent is able to be recycled. It's just not feasible. There's machinery, there's equipment, there's processes, there's trucking, there's all these systems in place that are meant to capture most everything. But inevitably, engineering can't 100 percent capture every single thing that we want to recycle. So that was kind of an ah-ha moment is we really just have to do our best given the systems that we have in place now, and hope for and work toward systems that will encompass even more. But throwing those things in because you want to recycle them is not, it kind of hinders the system that's in place. So that is an ah-ha moment. And so being in my position I've also helped my friends and my family members try to come to that realization as well. Like that little scrap of plastic from your contact lens case, you know, it's not big enough. It's going to wind up in the trash because it's just going to fall through the cracks type of thing. So, yep.

Nickerson: And so what do you do as the facilities operator?

10:33

McVey: Like the facilities assistant. So by and by, I help my supervisor, the operations manager, as well as the facilities manager, with various items to support all of our facilities. So when I was hired, we had eight drop off centers. We're not down to six. We'll be back up to seven and maybe back up to eight over the next few years. With that, each facility needs to be permitted with the agency of natural resources. So I help—those permits only come due every five years, it's now every ten years. So I helped with the permit renewal applications. On a more kind of daily and weekly basis, I help keep tabs and track of the materials that all of our facilities accept. So I review invoices that we receive and, you know, make sure that things are in order in that regard. And I enter the, basically the weights from our truck scale tickets into a database. And we just keep tabs of everything from how much electronics we've collected, how many bulbs we shipped out, scrap metal tonnages, recycling tonnages.

Then I also work with the supervisor for all the drop off centers. We have a staff of about 25 people, including a handful of full timers but then a lot of part timers and some people who are just on call. And I help create procedures to get us all on the same page of how we run our facilities. So the customer that comes to Richmond where I work three days a week will be

charged the same, you know, if they take a couch to my place it's going to be the same charge as if they go to Essex. Things like that. And it's a lot. It's a lot to manage. I also help train new employees on how to run the cash register and how to handle waste. There's certain waste we need to handle in a proper way to be compliant with state and federal regulations about universal waste. So it's a lot of behind the scenes work. Also it's helpful to have me in the office, too, a few days a week because I can tell them you know, what the cash register looks like and how things happen in the field. And vice versa. When I'm out in the field, I can you know, share with my coworkers what happened if they hadn't yet had a chance to read the updates.

Nickerson: Yeah. So you kind of act as a bridge between the administration and the folks who are working in the field at the drop off stations.

McVey: Yeah. Yup. That's correct. Mm hmm.

Nickerson: That makes a lot of sense.

McVey: Which I think is valuable, right, because there's a lot of us who if you're hired to work at a drop off center, that's where you work. And sometimes it's hard to see, and honestly, the first, I think it was probably a year, maybe a year and a half before I assumed one day, and then I assumed two days to make a fulltime position. And before doing that, I myself felt a little disjointed from the overall organization. Because there's so much that happens districtwide. Not just in the administrative office, but with our compost facility, with our hazardous waste facility, our maintenance crew. And from a drop off center perspective, you get a little bit of that. But having been in the office now, I realize that it's a very, very dynamic organization. A lot of facets and a lot of people working really hard to do what they do. But sometimes you can get into your bubble and not realize or appreciate what everybody else is doing.

Nickerson: Is it hard to find people to staff drop off centers?

15:06

McVey: We have... it's been a few years since we've gone out for an actual position. We have a lot of long-time, dedicated employees. People that have been here longer than myself, like 20, 25 years. And some of those people started out eight hours a week, and they're still with us. So we have like a solid core of employees. And positions don't come up that frequently. So it's been a few years since we've had an official position to hire out for. We do occasionally, we welcome applications and occasionally we'll have a need for an on-call position. But we've gotten some great candidates when we do officially you know, send the word out. And sometimes it works out for the people who are, you know, kind of retiring from their main job and they want just a couple days a week, or just one day a week. And that works well for us because our main need is on Saturdays when all of our facilities are open. But we do have a lot of full-timers now who have vacation accrued. And if they want to take a weekday off, we have people who can also fill in there. So.

Nickerson: So could you describe Richmond to me a little bit?

McVey: Mm hmm. It would be one of our more rural settings.

Nickerson: Because Chittenden County is a more urban part of Vermont in general.

McVey: Correct. Right. And so we're out there. We have a beautiful view of Camel's Hump. It's a great location. And we, our facility, I'm not sure, it might be, I don't know how many acres, a couple of acres. And ours is set up in the area of an old landfill for the area. It's just out in the open, essentially. We have two other facilities. Our main one's in Essex in South Burlington. And they have a superstructure, so they have a really nice—(knock on door)

Nickerson: I can pause this.

McVey: Pause that, okay. Yeah! Come on in. [pause]

Nickerson: So you were describing the Richmond—

17:52

McVey: Right, the Richmond site. Okay. So it is, where a few of our other sites have a, what's called a super structure, it's a large, roofed structure and under that are all the collection areas, Richmond is all out in the open. We do have a small, or short [tip?] wall, so some of our containers are sunken a little bit so it's easier for people to dispose of their large items into. So we have that. And then there's a couple, which I like, we have several, actually a couple of shipping containers which are pretty cool, that we have retrofitted to be building and collection areas. So even though we're out in the open, we have these structures that people can walk into to put their hard cover books in and have a little cubbyhole to put their batteries and their mercury-containing bulbs into, where we house our electronics collection in storage areas. And then we have a large area at the back of the facility where we stage our appliances for processing. We collect leaves and other compostable materials for composting, and then we have a wood bunker for our wood waste, which gets chipped and ground offsite.

And that's basically it. It's a nice, has a nice flow to it. We have quite a few customers that use it. I would say it's four to five hundred during the weekdays. So that's between two days, we're open two days during the week. And then on Saturday, our busiest day almost ever, I think, was a few weekends ago when we had our one-day hazardous waste collection event. And we had just shy of 600 cars through the facility. Which is pretty astounding, since we're only open seven and a half hours. Our typical Saturday recently has been about, I would say, 500 plus cars. So, which is still very, very busy. And there's two of us on Saturdays, so you're straight out, right out, for seven and a half hours. I mean eight hours, really, but seven and a half hours that we're open to the public. So we put on a lot of miles on our work boots. And we expend a lot of energy explaining where everything goes. And for those people who've never been, we walk them through the steps.

But it's a great site. A lot of really dedicated people. Regular customers go to Richmond and want to do the right thing, and have all these great questions. And when possible, I love to spend time explaining the finer details of certain things and how we need recyclables to be,

and/or what else they might be able to pull out of their trash that they didn't realize they could recycle.

Nickerson: What are some of the most common questions that the public asks?

21:08

McVey: Well, why can't we recycle Styrofoam? Why can't we recycle plastic bags? And where do I put this? That's the main question. (laughs) They hold up whatever. It could be an alkaline battery or it could be an old Teflon pot that needs to be disposed of. And we've got a place for that. You can put the pot in scrap metal and the battery in our battery pail and we'll handle it.

Nickerson: Yeah. So you guys handle lots of different kinds of materials.

McVey: Yeah, I think I counted it recently. It's about 18 to 20. And some of the items that we handle we further separate them out into a couple of categories. Like the electronics, there's kind of two different sorts that we do. The customer puts it in one area and then we put it in two different areas. Batteries, similar. We had thought to ask the customers to sort things out. But it gets too complicated. We've found some people can do it for sure, but by and large, we feel it's best that we'll just take it from here type of thing. And certainly with the batteries, there's proper ways to handle them. There's been some lithium battery fires in other waste facilities throughout the country. So that's kind of a concern these days. So we've had a lot of training on that. And we feel our operators are best to manage that, at least from our facility until it gets to our hazardous waste facility and they kind of double check our work and make sure it's totally safe to go over the road. So.

Nickerson: So could you walk me through what a typical Saturday is like at Richmond? Like from what time you arrive there to when you call it quits for the day?

23:23

McVey: Yeah. So we arrive about 15 minutes, 10 or 15 minutes before hand. It's an eight-hour workday.

Nickerson: So that would be like at eight in the morning?

McVey: So we open the gates at eight, so we would arrive at 7:45ish. And basically you're setting up the cash register and then you go outside and you start opening up all the collection containers. And that's basically it. But again, it's quite a distance, so you're opening things up, you're starting up the compactors, making sure they're working properly. You do a safety check, make sure when you press the emergency stop button that it indeed stops. So there's a couple of safety checks we do in the morning. And that's about it. The idea is we spend about 20 minutes at the end of the day after we close the gate to really close things up and make sure that it really, everything's good to go for the next morning. You just set yourself up for success for the next morning. So when you do open up, we can have quite a line right off the bat, so you want to be ready to handle them and not have to do catch-up work. So a lot of just opening containers up

and making sure you've got supplies for the day. And then open up the gate at eight AM. And it's usually busy for, I would say, at least a solid half hour, 45 minutes. And those are the customers who pretty much know the routine. They're just trying to get that portion [out of it?] so they can get on to the day. So those are pretty easy customers.

And then I would say ten - ish, then the loads start coming in where people may have already spent some time in the morning cleaning up. The more awkward loads, maybe, clear outs and what not. I would say right off the bat in the morning, people just have their—

Nickerson: And a clear-out, can you tell me—

McVey: A clear out could be anything from the five foot-tall projection TV that's been in their yard for the past five years, along with, well, they probably couldn't get a loveseat in there, but maybe some random plastic toys that they've been hanging onto in the yard as well. Put it in their pickup, drive it over to us. So basically miscellaneous items.

Nickerson: So this is when people are either moving and they're clearing out their home from a move, or they're doing a big spring or fall cleaning project.

McVey: Correct. Right. Right. Right. So, and then Saturday we see quite a few of those loads. But again, they're more frequent, I would say, in the spring and the fall. Clear out, and then clear out the garage so they can put their car in the garage for the winter type of thing. You know, we have seasonal times for the garden cleanup. People are starting to clear out their gardens right now. It's early September or late September, so that's happening. And then in October, we're going to get all the leaves, and so we'll have pretty large loads of leaves. And you know, after a wind event, we'll have all the tree limbs that people are clearing off of their yard. So that's about it. But yeah, on Saturdays you're pretty much, you know, it's kind of like a pinball game. At least when you're out in the yard, because you're both standing by the compactors, which need to be cycled regularly, because of all the material that people are putting in there. We have one compactor for recyclables and the other compactor's for trash. And they do need to be cycled. But at the same time, somebody might need their oil pan dumped out. So we go over and we dump it out. And the battery pail might be filling up, so you need to sort the batteries. Or electronics are coming in, so you need to move them from one area to the storage area. And there's a myriad number of tasks that need to be handled. I feel like customers, they see us walking around, and they certainly see us working, but they might not realize all those extra steps. And we're also answering quite a few questions.

And then there's also times where people come in and they may have either never been to the drop off before, or it might be their first time with other than a bag of trash. And they might not realize that they have to pay for certain items. And sometimes you have to soften the blow a little bit and spend some time explaining why we charge for items, and why we charge what we charge. And sometimes that might not be enough, so you need to take it a little bit further. And if that doesn't help, then we always have the business card for our supervisor. And he can certainly spend the time. You know, it's unfortunate that that sometimes happens on a busy day when you would love to have the time, and you just don't. We have a long line of traffic, and sometimes it's out on the road. And for safety reasons, we just need to send people through, yeah, keep

people moving. So that's a challenge. And I feel badly for those people who could benefit from a few extra moments.

29:47

Nickerson: Yeah, yeah. And it also sounds like there are lots of things that you need to be paying attention to and taking care of. Like when you were saying if a bin is getting full, or a pan needs to be emptied or something.

McVey: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Nickerson: It sounds almost like you need to have eyes in the back of your head.

McVey: For sure. Definitely. Yes. Exactly. Exactly. And we do have signs for containers, but just the sheer amount of activity that happens on site, for some people it can be almost too much to even see the signs. So we're also at the same time we're sometimes fishing a TV out of the trash and putting it in the right spot. Or we're fishing a chair out of the scrap metal container, which needs to go in the bulky trash container. We're fishing scrap metal out of the bulky container. So quite often we're actually doing that, which kind of goes back to my point of having us handle at least certain things, like the electronics and the batteries. If they can at least get in the right spot, then we'll handle it from there. But we're almost constantly fishing stuff out of the wrong container. A bag of trash out of the recycling, recycling out of the trash. It's unfortunate, but it happens. I try not to let it get to me too much. But I, you know, I'm a part of the community, too, so I know it's like oh, we just all need to be a little more mindful when we're doing things. But there's a lot going on in people's lives, so I try to keep that in my head as well. For sure.

Nickerson: I know that the waste management industry in general is one of the more dangerous jobs.

McVey: Mm hmm.

31:55

Nickerson: Are there personal risks for people who work at drop off centers?

McVey: Yes, there are quite a few. We all wear high-vis gear. Either a safety vest or a t-shirt or what not. And we outfit ourselves with our personal protective equipment, PPE is what it's called in the industry. And we, so—

Nickerson: What's the personal protective equipment, anyway? (laughs)

McVey: So that could be anything from safety-toed work shoes or boots, I wear boots. Safety glasses, earplugs, again, the safety vest or the high-vis t-shirt, high-vis outerwear. And so, and then, you know, I prefer to wear long pants all the time. We do have the option to wear shorts. So

that's, and then a hardhat if we're going below the tip wall, or working with a roll off truck when the truck driver's on site. So that's our personal protective equipment.

The other thing is just being aware, being mindful of everything that's going on. We have lots of car and truck and traffic in the facility. So being aware of where people are, who's backing up, who's backing out, who's backing in. And then there are the compactors, which these days we've really simplified it. We just never, obviously we're never going into them. But making sure the safety mechanisms work, the stop button works.

When we're actually handling, if we need to assist somebody. Generally, it's a do it yourself facility. But if somebody just had shoulder surgery and we're available and not busy with other things and we're comfortable with it, we'll help them with their bag of trash, of course. But I always check with them, okay, any broken glass, anything I should be aware of? And we always wear gloves as well. That's the main thing. I always have gloves on.

And then there's the other things, like residents can safely dispose of needles if they're diabetic or whatever they might have. We have procedures for handling those, which is basically we don't handle those but we tell them how to prepare that. But on occasion, we might see one and we would never touch it. We use what they call I guess it's mechanical, or engineering controls to not touch it. So it's a broom and a shovel. If we happen to see a needle out of a container.

And then there's lots of moving and lifting that we do. So we practice safe lifting and moving techniques. So there's a lot of that. If there's a huge TV that's somewhere and I can't move it myself, I will get a coworker when he or she's available. Or oftentimes if there's a customer out, I might say, "Hey, how are you feeling today?" I would certainly check in with how they are feeling physically. And some people have said no, and I'm like, that's totally fine, I totally get it. But other people are more than happy to just help me move a bulky TV just onto the ground. Once it's on the ground, I can move it myself. So there's quite a few things that happen.

I do want to mention in the facilities assistant portion of the job, I'm also a member of the safety committee. So I work with the committee and the committee's made up of people from all facets of the organization. So we work together to identify hazards and potential risks of everything that we do at our facilities. So I was heavily involved in creating job hazard assessments for each of our 30 or more tasks that we do.

So the risks are many. But with our proper training and how we outfit ourselves, the job can be done very safely. So.

36:39

Nickerson: So that's actually another one of my questions is, is there particular training or licenses that somebody needs to become a drop off operator?

McVey: There's quite a bit of training that we ourselves provide our employees. And that again, it kind of like the initial intake, we have a safety and compliance manager now and he does a, you know, an intake about fire safety. There's a couple things that everybody needs regardless if they're working at a drop off center or in the office that they need before they start the job. So there's that initial training. There's also the training that myself and a few other employees, trainer, drop off center operator trainers provide. And in that we go through each task and we basically we provide, it's all on the job training, and it's pretty extensive. And in that we also cover some kind of universal waste handling procedures, which are pretty specific. Because we need to maintain compliance, as I mentioned earlier, with how we are managing the materials on site once we receive them and before we ship them off. So there's quite a bit of that that's involved.

We also provide an annual safety training to all staff. And it covers quite a bit, you know, how to work around heavy equipment. If there's a bucket loader that's on site, our maintenance crew is there doing work or pushing the wood pile back. Or if our roll off truck is on site servicing one of our containers, how do we safely work with our driver? And so we provide pretty extensive training on that. But there's no official federal or state training. But however, the state agency of natural resources has provided additional training, further training in how to manage electronic waste. And a few other statewide programs that we're participating in. Like the battery recycling program, florescent bulb handling. So the state does provide some of that training as well.

Nickerson: Great. So I just have a few more questions. So what is your favorite part of the job, or what you consider the best part of the job?

McVey: I would say the fact that I have the ability to work outside and be physically active in a setting where I'm also providing like an essential public service. To me, it's very satisfying to engage with the public in both a setting that I really like and in an area where I feel very strongly both personally and professionally. I love basically talking trash to people and with people and talking recycling and waste diversion. That sounds kind of wonky and technical, but yeah, to me I find if I can help people to either shift how they're doing things or reinforce that they're doing things great, you know, give them the support they need to keep on keeping on, even though maybe their coworkers in whatever job they're in aren't so into it, it's very satisfying.

And I also feel like in the drop off center role, I'm interacting with the lunch lady and the surgeon and the police chief and the you know, the snow truck driver, and all, the farmer, I'm interacting with so many different facets of our community that, but we're all coming together to do the same thing, which is to manage our waste responsibly. So I kind of like that I'm a part of that thread.

Nickerson: Do you get to know, since you've been doing it for so long, have you gotten to know some of your customers pretty well?

41:36

McVey: I have. Yes, yes. I've seen a lot of kids kind of grow up and become, from their car seat into the driver's seat, which is pretty cool to see. I've also known a lot of dogs. Everybody brings their dogs. And I have to say that I've cried over many dogs' passings over the years. It's terrible. They pull up and you don't see a nose in the window anymore. And I gently ask the question. Or sometimes people just tell me that their whatever, Rocky or so and so passed away. And it's hard. But you know, so we're kind of, it's a mutual relationship. I've had family stuff happen. My mother passed away, years ago, and people were aware of that. So, yeah, we have some very good eggs out there.

Nickerson: Yeah. When I was growing up, the town dump was also a place to socialize. That's when you would see people and hang out and chat sometimes.

McVey: Mm hmm. Right. There's a lot of that. But also in my position as a, I do chat, but I'm also hyper aware of the need to move people through. So I probably come off to some people as being a little less than whatever, social? But I'm also there to do a job and I need to do it well. And there's always more that needs to be done than I can do in eight hours. So I'm also aware I'm always moving and always working.

Nickerson: Yeah. Yeah. And if there's a line of cars backed up, you've got to keep the line moving.

McVey: Oh, certainly. Yeah. Certainly, if that's the case, yes, yes.

Nickerson: And what's the most challenging aspect of the job or your least favorite part of it?

McVey: I would say the most challenging, least favorite is telling people how much they owe when it's over a certain, what if you didn't work in my position you would think would be a reasonable price to pay. In the Northeast, it's just very expensive to dispose of certain items that are going to the landfill. So I cringe sometimes at the amount of money I'm telling somebody they need to pay us. And you know, to that end, I do sometimes help couch it by saying like, "You know what, that's what I pay when I come here. If I brought that large load, I'm paying the same as you. We don't get free trash because we're employed by the solid waste district. We pay what you pay." So I try to couch it in that way. So that's one.

The other one is encountering people who either when they get that, or just in general, some people aren't into it.

Nickerson: The that?

McVey: Well, so sometimes people, regardless of what we tell them, even if it's a reasonable fee, like twenty dollars for a couch, some people will pay it no problem. Other people will be like, "I'm going to put it on the side of the road, I'm going to not put it on the side of the road for free, I'm going to toss it over the bank." That's the most disappointing thing, when people will tell you that. Either they threaten that they're going to do it, or they think that things are too much that that's the reason why people are throwing stuff over the bank. It's disappointing. And sometimes, you know, years ago we used to charge for TVs. That fee went away, probably

almost 10 years ago now. So TVs have been free for residents to drop off. Yet we still see them by the side of the road sometimes. So the people who will throw those things at the side of the road, even if they're free, we're still finding them there. So some people, some people are just very resistant. And you know, it's difficult sometimes. People move to Vermont from elsewhere where their property taxes covered the cost for things. So it's a hard thing for people to digest sometimes, that they have to pay for something that they don't want anymore. So I can sympathize with that, to a point. So, you know.

46:34

Nickerson: Second to last question, do you think that 30 years from now there will be somebody running drop off, that there will be a need for drop off centers in our communities?

McVey: I, I do think for sure that there is a place, even that far in the future. Given what we are producing, I feel like there is all these special wastes, like a curbside hauler would not pick up. They just can't have 20 different compartments in their truck to put the battery and the bag of trash and the TV. They can't separate all that out. And to combine it is not safe for certain materials. So I feel like our facilities will, though they may look different, and I'm for sure they will probably look different 30 years from now, I still feel like there will be a need for at least a certain portion of our offerings. You know, for those special recyclable items that should not be put in your recycling bin. So I do feel like there will be a need.

Also, one of the other things that's great for the drop off center is it's like people's opportunity to interface with somebody who's directly handling their waste. They can ask that question that they may not have gone online and submitted a question, or they might not have called our hotline to ask the question. But "oh, you're right here, can I just ask you about this thing?" So I feel like that's an invaluable service that it's great that we can offer it six days a week. Our facilities are open six days a week, depending on where you go. So people have that opportunity to ask a question in person.

Nickerson: So is there anything that we haven't covered yet that you would like people to know about the work that you do?

McVey: Not really. I feel like this could be for any profession, really, it's a tough job. It's not a glamorous job by any stretch of the imagination. Showing your appreciation, if you feel it. We're happy to handle complaints and criticisms and this and that. It's nice, and people do this. They say thanks for doing what you do. You know, it's really nice to hear if people appreciate the work that you do, to hear that. I try to do it when I go out in the world and interact with various people. I try to tell them, thank you for doing what you're doing. But realizing that it's definitely not glamorous, but it's really interesting. Embracing your waste will help us handle it better. If you can get a handle on what you're producing and, you know, take an interest in what you're getting rid of. If it's gross to you, it's kind of gross to us as well. Which is fine, it's part of the job. But we're not in it because we really like, you know, handling really gross stuff. (laughs) So. But it's nice to be in an active, worthwhile position. It's part of the fabric of society is dealing with stuff that we don't want. Consuming is one thing, but we've all got to take an active role in

handling it. Even while it's in your kitchen or in your garage, kind of treat it with a little respect. (laughs) Try to make less of it.

Nickerson: Yeah, yeah, well it's a really, we all produce so much waste that I think it's really important to recognize the people who are handling things after we throw them out.

McVey: Mm hmm. Yes.

Nickerson: So thank you so much for sharing about what your jobs are like. I realize we didn't talk too much about the facilities—

McVey: Right, no, that's—

Nickerson: [unclear], but I really appreciate your taking the time.

McVey: You're welcome.

Nickerson: Great. Thanks tons.

55:13 [portion of original interview edited out by request]  
[End Interview.]