

Where does our food waste go?

The Bethlehem Gadfly Climate Action Plan, Environment, Environmental Advisory Council February 5, 2019

(The latest in a series of posts relating to the environment and Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council)

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Christina Tatu, "In first for Lehigh Valley, Easton sewer plant looks to food scraps to generate power." Morning Call, February 4, 2019.

Gadfly: where does your household waste go?

The Easton Sewer Authority announced plans to design and build a system to use food scraps to produce methane to power their waste water treatment plant. They believe that there is enough food waste being created by service area restaurants and residents to drop their power bill by \$450,000 a year.

The cost of the waste-to-energy plant is projected at between \$1.5 and 2 million, which suggests a payback period of no more than four years. The plant already produces some of the methane they burn to power the plant. Easton Sewer Authority plant management believes they'll get enough food waste from their service area's customers to make up the difference with the new system.

Because of Bethlehem's fractured household waste collection process, it's not likely that city residents could include compostables in their curbside collection along with recyclable material and the stuff that goes to the landfill. But that's not the end of the story.

Lehigh University, Moravian College, Bethlehem Area School District, Moravian Academy, and the parochial school systems generate food waste daily. The proposed Easton plant needs 12,000 gallons of liquid food waste a day — or about 48 tons.

Could Bethlehem power its water treatment plant without having to collect residential compost?

- John