

# It's the Law: Carters Must Get Licenses

**W**ESTCHESTER has adopted a local law requiring garbage carters to obtain a county license to operate here — something they can only get if they have no ties to organized crime.

The licensing proposal was adopted unanimously Monday by the Board of Legislators and signed into law the next day by County Executive Andrew J. Spano. Its enactment follows almost two years of hearings on how to clean up an industry that Federal investigators said was rife with illegal mob activity. The new law is similar to a licensing law in effect in New York City since 1996.

"I believe this is one of the most significant pieces of legislation the county has passed in recent times," said Legislator Thomas J. Abinanti, a Democrat from Greenburgh who is chairman of the Board's Subcommittee on Trash Haulers. He added, "In practical terms, it's going to drive the mob out of the garbage industry and restore competition and hopefully drive down the price customers have to pay."

The new law is designed to put an end to what Federal prosecutors say was a decades-old system used by various organized crime families to assert themselves by any means to provide carting services in certain regions. This led to what is referred to as a "mob tax" — the higher prices customers paid.

With the enactment of the new law, garbage carters will have to have a license to operate in Westchester as of next March 15. Such licenses will only be issued to companies whose principals and top executives are "of good moral character," a determination that would be made after a background check, Mr. Abinanti said. Past association with organized crime figures could be a factor for denying a license.

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The licensing law also sets up a customers' bill of rights designed to give them free choice on whether to renew existing carting contracts or terminate them without penalty. "They can shop around, and they will be guaranteed protection against unfair business practices," Mr. Abinanti said.

In 1997, 21 individuals and companies involved in the carting industry in Westchester were convicted of various Federal racketeering charges. Those included the Suburban Carting Company of Mamaroneck and Trottown Transfer, a subsidiary of Suburban, both then county government contractors, and their principals, including Thomas Milo of Pelham. In July the county hired Waste Management, a Texas concern and one of the country's largest garbage haulers, to truck garbage from the county's garbage transfer stations to the Peekskill incinerator and to run the county's recycling plant in Yonkers.

In addition to passing the licensing law, the Board on Monday approved spending \$50,000 this year to establish a new department, Solid Waste Licensing, to administer it. Mr. Abinanti said that in the future the department should be able to pay for itself from licensing fees. ■

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