

## Illegal dumpers trashed Many call for cameras to deter scofflaws

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Photo by John Wilcox

Trash-toting out-of-towners are illegally dumping their garbage on Boston streets, infuriating Hub residents, prompting inspectors to sift through refuse to catch the scofflaws and prompting one city councilor to call for spy cameras.

“It comes from all over,” said Michael Mackan, the city’s chief code enforcer. “You find average, everyday residents who don’t want to pay for a sticker will leave their trash in a waste basket . . . or throw it in a Dumpster.”

On Wednesday, City Councilor Rob Consalvo will propose to the council the installation of wireless, motion-activated cameras that emit bright lights and loud warnings at chronic hot spots for illegal dumping. A desolate stretch of Providence Street in Hyde Park and behind a shopping plaza on American Legion Highway in Roslindale are two such problem areas.

“They could improve the quality of life in the city,” Consalvo said. The cameras can act as a deterrent and a crime-fighting tool because they can zero in on a license plate from 250 feet away - even in the dark, he said.

Richard O’Mara, who owns a garden center in Dorchester’s Lower Mills, recently witnessed an elderly woman take two garbage bags from her car and toss them in a trash can outside a Washington Street pizza parlor.

“I was a little stunned . . . She’s a senior citizen from Milton. I know because she’s a customer,” said O’Mara. “It’s been an ongoing problem for years.”

Milton has a “pay as you throw” system that charges residents \$3 per bag. Braintree charges homeowners \$170 a year for garbage removal and Chelsea \$240.

Boston, meanwhile, allows residents to put out unlimited trash bags for pick-up, along with big items such as sofas and appliances.

Pat O’Neill, who heads Dorchester’s Ashmont-Adams Neighborhood Association, frequently fields complaints from residents angry about outsiders taking advantage of Boston’s generous garbage policy.

“It’s frustrating. Why should the city of Boston have to pick it up? They would not like it if we went into their town and dropped off our rubbish,” she said.

O’Neill said the cameras could help snag contractors, who discard construction debris, as well as suburbanites who toss their household waste in Boston.

Leo Boucher, an assistant commissioner with the city’s Inspectional Services Department, said his agency uses three hidden cameras at chronic dumping grounds but would welcome more.

“We definitely go after them more vigorously now,” he said, noting that the city last fiscal year handed out 3,083 violations for illegal dumping with fines ranging from \$100 to \$1,000.

Code enforcers must play detective.

“My code enforcement guys actually rip the bags open with rubber gloves and diligently go through them looking for mail, magazines, packaging, anything with someone’s name and address on it,” he said.

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