



OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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RE: Accountability, Transparency, and the State of Solid Waste Services in Jacksonville

Thursday, January 13, 2022
10:00 A.M.

Location: Lynwood Roberts Rm., City Hall

Attendees:

CM Matt Carlucci	Leeann Krieg	Greg Huntington	Sheri Webber
CM Michael Boylan	Rachel Zimmer	David Searcy	Robin Byrd
CM Al Ferraro	Stephanie Burch	John Hipp	Ann Marie Tucker
CM Terrance Freeman	Nikki Kimbleton	Bill Brinkley	Paige Hunt
Brian Hughes	Carlo Fassi	Jason Graves	
John Pappas	Marcel Dalby	Kim Taylor	
Will Williams	Bill Stubblebine	Phillip Peterson	

NOTE: Not all attendees signed in. Total attendance was approximately 40.

Materials distributed by Public Works: Recycling & Site Guide, Current Service Data, City Efforts To-Date, Collection Map, Collection Service History.

Video Link: https://jaxcityc.granicus.com/player/clip/3899?view_id=1&redirect=true

Meeting Convened: 10:04 AM

CM CARLUCCI

Ok, we're going to start on time and we're going to get a little public comment in. And so I'm going to start out and try to be as quick as I can about what my expectations are, and I'll have the Council Members that are here to introduce themselves in just a minute. I want to thank everyone for being here. Thank you for taking time to join the conversation today. And that's what I want it to be—conversation.

To my Council colleagues—thank you for being here to discuss concerns affecting our city as a whole. And to the Mayor's Office, we appreciate Mr. Brian Hughes, Chief Administrative Officer, for joining us and he will be our first speaker, followed by Mr. John Pappas, Director of Public Works, and Mr. Williams if he wants to add to the conversation somewhere. And by the way, I want to pay a high compliment to our city sanitation crews. They have done just an outstanding job. Just a shout-out, not to put anybody else down. I'm saying that we've got to give a shout-out to them.



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Also here today are representatives from the City's contracted haulers and perhaps others from Public Works. Thank you for being here to answer questions from my colleagues. Now, the purpose of today's meeting is to pursue greater accountability and transparency as we discuss what's happening with solid waste services across our city.

I'm sure that my fellow Council members have been receiving same calls and emails as I have, perhaps more, and hearing constituent concerns about missed collections, suspension of curbside recycling, whether we're going to have recycling again, and other related issues. So, I'm just trying to shine the light and lay everything out on the table here. Today is our opportunity to ask questions, gain clarity, ask what strategies or business plans are being put together to help remedy this problem. We're not here to criticize anybody and we're going to be civil in our discussions.

This meeting will be followed in the coming weeks by two Town Halls to be held in West Jacksonville and Arlington. Details about those meetings will be released later today or tomorrow. None of those meetings will conflict with any of the redistricting town halls that our Rules Committee is having, led by our Chair of Rules, CM Brenda Priestly Jackson. At the Town Halls, we will allow more time for public comment because today only 15 minutes are allotted. Any members of the public wishing to speak today, go ahead and complete a speaker card and hand that over to Sheri right over there.

Okay, lastly, this meeting is being streamed and recorded. So, we ask that everyone speak up. Now, let's go around the table and state your name and district for the record, Council Members, and then we'll get started. And then after that, I'll pass the floor to Brian Hughes, Chief Administrator from the Mayor's Office. Okay, so how many council members have we got here?

CM BOYLAN

Michael Boylan, District Six, and if I might, Mr. Chair, comment a little bit about last night's experience: District Six we hosted a town hall meeting. And I want to mention that Mr. Williams, Mr. Hughes, and Mr. Pappas, Bill Joyce, and also David Searcy from WastePro, which serves the Mandarin area, were in attendance. And we spent an hour and 15 minutes on this conversation. And I want to say it was a great conversation, a lot of involvement by the community. We had probably 50 or more people in the room, another 25 or so on Zoom. And it was vital, as you're looking to have today, with respect to your concern about transparency. Mr. Hughes was over the top in his transparency yesterday. It was a typical district town hall meeting. We had a lot of items on the agenda. It was an hour and a half, and we spent about 50 minutes on solid waste.

So, I want to commend them in the time it took doing that, and I appreciate and understand more than ever the frustration they've expressed through this process as well. Thank you.



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CM CARLUCCI

Thank you, Councilman Boylan.

CM FERRARO

Al Ferraro, District Two. Thank you for having this meeting. We have a lot of people in our area and abroad who have been really worried about the pick up of recycling. The yard waste is gone quite a bit. I gotta say that the phone calls have really stopped on that. But the recycling is something that the community is worried about, particularly the dumpsters in the parks. So, I'm particularly interested in hearing what we might be able to do on the short term, as well as the long term. So, thanks for having this meeting, and thank you for what you're doing right now.

CM CARLUCCI

Thank you, CM Ferraro for coming. You've got a busy schedule as does Mr. Boylan and all our colleagues. So, thank you for being here. Mr. Hughes, I will pass the floor to you, sir.

HUGHES

Thank you, Councilman, and thank you to you and the other CMs here and haulers who are here. I'll start by assuring that we are listening. The frustration we see expressed in emails and phone calls are shared and not lost on us. I will say that the frustration of one resident about one location is compounded to us by the hundreds of thousands of locations. We share the frustration and disappointment in where we are. And you know these guys and I are constantly in contact, looking for solutions and looking for ways to navigate this problem.

I'll take a few minutes, if it's alright, just to remind everybody a little bit of history, and how we've gotten where we are. I could go on, as Mr. Boylan is aware from last night.

[indecipherable]

CM CARLUCCI

We've got a hard stop at 11:15 and a lot of people needing to speak, so if you could, seven minutes would be great.

HUGHES

The quick history would be, obviously, that when we consolidated this government a little over 50 years ago, we consolidated a central, urban core that was served by city services, and the rest of the county were prominently served privately through franchise agreements. When the government consolidated,



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that process consolidated, and it's evolved a little bit over time. But where we are today is a small area along the river served by the city and then the remainder of the county is dissected into three additional regions that each have a contract hauler assigned to them by contract through the procurement process.

Starting probably about a year and a half to two years ago—really, before COVID—some labor market challenges really started to show themselves to the haulers, particularly with CDL drivers were becoming in higher demand. And then, exacerbating that to the extreme, COVID came in and really presented challenges to every workforce and every process. And that's really amplified what we're seeing and why our constituents are rightly frustrated. It's creating pressure that we're trying to deal with.

We have recently, in the last couple of years, decided to respond to these concerns about one of the contract haulers in our community, take their region back out to bid. The hauler that had the contract and one additional hauler were the only two respondents to that procurement. We ended up scoring a settlement with a new hauler for that region. That's Meridian, and then the other two regions are currently served by WastePro and Waste Management. Waste Management is taking an area we had previously with Advanced Disposal, and that change occurred in a corporate merger and acquisition between Advance and Waste Management.

So, our haulers today are Meridian, WastePro, and Waste Management, and the city. The four regions that are clearly reflected on the map. Republic had been in our region, but they continued to contract with us as the managers of our recycling process.

So just real brief... some of the things that we've done, obviously, that contract hauler going out to bid was in response to some concerns in that area. And then as more concerns kind of snowballed, some additional things we've done are, obviously, we have city crews that are available to go in and augment contract areas. If something is falling behind in one, the city crews, although they have their own region, will obviously go out. Will and his team, because of where we are in that process, are working many, many days and many, many hours without a break. And it's taking a toll. We have vacancies in Solid Waste. To address those vacancies, in the last budget cycle, we ended up doing some pay adjustments to try to make it easier to recruit and retain. And as I'm sure you'll hear from the haulers, that's the problem they're having as well... recruiting and retaining staff that allows for consistent and thorough coverage of the area.

So, those crews are out augmenting contract areas. We've had some non-solid waste employees at the City trying to augment staff. We had fire personnel because they have CDLs, and when they aren't actually driving fire trucks, doing it overtime. We have emergency debris contracts that are traditionally



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for storms and hurricanes to clear roads. With those contracts in place, we actually activated some of that contracting to try to augment yard waste and some additional collections. And then, most recently, the Council felt the augmented yard waste, particularly in Mr. Boylan's area it helped the most, but essentially, it's a private contractor for yard and bulk waste processing company to use their facility essentially as a transfer station. So that, particularly in the region Mr. Boylan serves, it has really cut down the yard waste transport times.

And then, obviously, we suspended curbside recycling about three months ago. And I say "suspended curbside" because 15 locations across the city where the bins are, is intended to give at least an option to those who care about recycling and want to continue it. But for those who that doesn't work for should know that—though it's not optimal and not what we wish—but if they put recycling at the curbside, it does leave their house. We've actually seen and heard stories of people filling their garage with recycling. They can't take it to the collection site to put it into the bins, they think they're meant to hold onto it. That's not the case. Again, it's optimal to see recyclables to go to the landfill, but if it goes to the curb, it will be collected.

And those 15 locations are working, one in each district, plus the recycling facility. And a reminder that those locations are parks predominantly because of parking lots and access to roads. If the location of the park has become an issue for anyone, the easiest suggestion we could take is to review other city property in the district to see if it's suitable as it relates to space, parking, and asphalted areas, as well as access to trucks. I think I'll stop there.

CM CARLUCCI

You'll have a chance to answer some other questions. Mr. Pappas, you have five to seven minutes. We're not trying to rush you, but you know we got to move on. Introducing our Director of Public Works, John Pappas. And God bless you, sir.

PAPPAS

Thank you, CM. Appreciate the opportunity. John Pappas here, Public Works Department. I think Mr. Hughes really laid out the challenges that are being encountered currently and have been for a while, but even more so as COVID has impacted the workforce. So we're trying, we're doing everything we can to work through those. We work very closely out with just our own staff and also the contract hauler. And I think the items Mr. Hughes laid out about the things we've implemented; I think have lessened the impact. I certainly understand that there are significant impacts out there, but we're focused on trying to get this thing back where it needs to be.

CM CARLUCCI



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And one thing—I'm going to let you keep going—but we've heard and read a lot about the problems that we've talked about so far. But I'm wanting to kind of look to what we're doing to move ahead. Other cities and municipalities have re-started their recycling, and we just started researching that yesterday, but if you can give us kind of what your business plan is, and the haulers will have perhaps an opportunity to talk on that as well. What's the business plan for remedying this and getting back to recycling? And getting back to a regular schedule.

PAPPAS

It's all about the resources, and the resources with the haulers and we, and to be able to accommodate that curbside collection and not fall on the other collections. In the solid waste world, the most critical thing for us is picking up the garbage, and then the bulk, and then yard waste, and then recycling. You can't have garbage sitting on the curb. That becomes a health concern for us. So those become our priorities and working to get those resources back and fill the vacancies... we're doing everything we can to get there. But our focus is, until we have those resources... we can't let the other streams suffer.

CM CARLUCCI

Ok, is that all you've got?

PAPPAS

Yes, sir.

CM CARLUCCI

So, I want to thank you both. I hope everyone will understand the challenges that you face on a daily basis in your role as director and your entire team, and the administration. I'd like to move questions. Please indicate to whom you are directing your question—and I'm talking about our Council Members here. This meeting was intended really for our Council members. If the haulers, real quickly, if you could introduce yourselves and who you represent just so our Council members will know. I know the Mangler in the back there. We all know him. But I'll let you introduce yourself as well.

O'BRIEN

Sure. Mary O'Brien, Chief Marketing Officer, Meridian Waste.

HIPP

John Hipp, General Manager, Meridian Waste

DALBY

Marcel Dalby, I'm the area general manager for Waste Management, formerly Advanced Disposal.



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HUNTINGTON

Greg Huntington, Waste Management, Public Sector Solutions.

CM CARLUCCI

Ok, any other hauler representatives here?

SEARCY

Greg's blocking me out here... [laughter] I've been trying to get him to move but... [laughter]

CM CARLUCCI

Move that chair on over... [laughter]

SEARCY

Dave Searcy, Division Manager for WastePro.

CM CARLUCCI

Yes, sir. Thank you very much for being here. Anybody here from Republic?

BRINKLEY

Yeah, Bill Brinkley, General Manager.

CM CARLUCCI

Okay, you snooze, you lose. So, you gotta speak up.

All right. I'll turn it over to my colleagues here for any questions that they have.

CM BOYLAN

I think, if I might, Mr. Chair, there was a conversation last night about the question about glass. As you go to our website, it does say the glass is a recycled item yet—and it was misunderstanding, I'm sure—but on the containers themselves, Waste Management's containers, do not include the word glass as a permissible item. So, I'm getting... there was some confusion about that. Do you want to speak to that, Mr. Pappas? Or Mr. Hughes?

HUGHES

Yeah, it did come up last night. We looked at it again this morning. We're gonna rectify the confusion. I think it was caused by sort of mixed signage at a few locations where people were likely under the



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impression that those were... that drop off glass wasn't permitted. We're gonna go around and make sure that it's absolutely clear. Whatever went into the normal recycling stream at your curbside, can go into the bins. Whatever didn't go into your recycling stream at the curbside, should not be going in the bins. And depending on the volume of it going into the bins, you may actually be contaminating the bin and causing the entire bin to go to landfill. So, it's very important to follow the instructions, and where there was a mixed message, we'll make sure that's corrected.

CM BOYLAN

And that's a great segue to my second question, and I'd like to direct this to Waste Management, if I could. We did learn about contaminated bins, the large containers. When your drivers show up, I understand if there's something in there that doesn't belong there, it doesn't go to the recycling center. It goes to the city landfill. Could you clarify as to how discriminating your drivers are? I mean, if there's one plastic bag in there, do they take it out and allow the other materials to be recycled? Can you speak to that?

DALBY

Yes, certainly. So, at the drop off centers, all of those bins are currently going to the recycle center with Republic where they're being sorted and processed from there and only certain materials would be disposed of. The only thing that may preclude us from that is if you know there's a three-seater couch hanging out of the top of the dumpster, or something like that, or a propane grill or something like that which we can't take, but otherwise, I will say 99% of everything we've collected at drop centers has gone to the Republic recycling center.

CM BOYLAN

I think it's important, and I appreciate you saying that, because I think there's a misconception out there that some of those containers are arbitrarily going to the landfill. Do you want to follow up on that?

HUGHES

The answer, just to reiterate, that's not happening. It's not arbitrary, things go, but when they're obviously... like, we had moments in this very recent holiday, where mattresses, box springs, full refrigerators are sticking out. In that case, the driver is going to very clearly see this is off already, 'I can tell it's predominantly contaminated by non-recyclables.' And that's an easy call, but if it's a few bags or a few items, they're going through.

CM BOYLAN

And I'm sure Mr. Ferraro might raise this question as well, and I'm sorry to jump the gun on you, Mr. Ferraro, but obviously the conversations—and there's been a lot of conversations—about rebates to the



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citizens, and I know we had a long conversation about that, but can we give an abbreviated version of that today and understand the formula or the business model by which we operate. I understand we have enterprise fees, etc. and there's an expectation on the part of some citizens that because the service isn't being provided there should be some kind of rebate. But I understand the rationale for not doing that, but I'd like you all to explain that.

HUGHES

This will be a tag team between John Pappas and myself. So, the front end of that is a reminder about the overall economics, and they're so specific to the household, that you have to fill in. So obviously we all know that the Enterprise Fund is meant to collect enough money to do the job that it's assigned to do. So, we have a solid waste enterprise fund that is currently \$23 million total, sort of behind the curve, for what we [indecipherable].

The first thing I tell people is the fees they're paying on their property tax specifically for solid waste are not covering the cost of these operations, and these costs will likely only go up, in light of the labor market challenges that we're facing. And we have some rate reviews for the longer-term contracts coming up. I'm sure we're going to hear all about that. And we know that the long-term solution in what would make the enterprise square would be to raise the enterprise fee, but obviously in a challenging time when people are struggling, that's a political call that the Mayor and 19 Council members have to make about whether to impose higher fees on folks.

But the General Fund, each year, essentially ends up augmenting that. So, the first economic lesson for the people listening—and it's not a satisfactory answer and it's not an excuse—but beginning to understand that the rest of the city budget is already in some ways sort of augmenting the cost of solid waste. So that's on the macro level about what the fee does. There are more specifics. John?

PAPPAS

Thank you, Brian. Yeah, the one thing to understand is the solid waste fee, which is \$12.65, we call it 'per premise' which is actually a household, that is just a portion of the revenue that goes into the Enterprise Fund, and to get an understanding of the \$12.65 for the curbside collection side, the Enterprise Fund covers approximately 144 collections per year at each site. And if you think about that as garbage pick up each week, yard waste each week, and recycling every other week, and bulk collection—it equates to about 144 collection per site. And when you equate that to the \$12.65, which then equates to \$151.80 a year, that comes out to about \$1.05 per collection.

So, that's the current value of each of the collections, \$12.65 a month.



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CM BOYLAN

So, I'm sorry, one more question. The other issue that was raised last night, and a misconception out there, that the waste haulers are not impacted by these decisions, and we understand, call them fines or callback fees, that are pending, and I know for a fact that in the case of Waste Management, for the first 11 months of last year, cost then over \$750,000 in callbacks, if you will. In addition to all the other expenditures they have, in terms of bringing in other crews and try to maintain the services if they could. So, I don't know if the haulers want to speak to the impact of those lost dollars, in terms of your ability to serve the neighborhood and the challenge.

DALBY

Yes, Councilman, if I could. Marcel Dalby with Waste Management. You know there is a very well laid out liquidated damages clause in the contract that has been executed, really, for years against the haulers equally. I will tell you that while that is a mechanism that the city uses to penalize haulers for our lack of ability to service certain customers and certain routes. I think it's fair and equitable in terms of being applied fairly from the city's perspective. I will tell you, at least from the vantage of Waste Management, it doesn't impact what we're doing in terms of hiring. In terms of our rates. We've actually increased wages over 21% per driver in just the last 12 months, in an effort to try to keep up with obviously the CDL shortage and some of the labor issues that we're experiencing. We're actually offering a \$5000 sign-on bonus. So, while those penalties financially are burdensome, it's not affecting our decision making in terms of our ability or willingness to try and [indecipherable].

CM BOYLAN

I draw attention to Waste Pro because they serve my district and I've been very impressed with their efforts at retention and hiring and the bonuses and investments they're making to try and attract people. This is not a financial issue. It's a staffing or resource issue, as I understand. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CM CARLUCCI

You're welcome. Thank you for your valuable comments. CM Ferraro, I'd like to turn it over to you.

CM FERRARO

Thank you. So, as the customer is looking at it, as a citizen looking at it, they're paying for something they're not getting, and I get what we're saying here. There's more money going out than coming in. But taking a look at what they're going through there. They're not getting recycling picked up. In fact, now they're not getting their trash cans replaced or fixed when they're broken. So, from their point of view, they don't know all of what we're talking about as far as the money coming in and going out. What the



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customers are looking at is they're paying for something and not getting, and on top of that they're getting less as far as their trash cans being replaced or fixed.

Really where I want to go with this is, what do we do? How are we moving forward? I've talked with Jody Phillips with Clerk of the Courts about how to get people their licenses backwards to where we can, you know, try to help get more progress [indecipherable] other things. What mechanisms are we looking at to try and get more drivers, other than just the way we're going? Because the way we're going is kinda competing with everybody else. So, what are we doing to move the needle to where we're going to get back to picking up recycling? Or are we not going to do that? Because I think a lot of people just want to know what are we going to do or what we're not going to do?

CM CARLUCCI

Thank you. That's exactly right.

CM FERRARO

Whoever wants to answer that question.

HUGHES

It came up before, so let me be clear that suspension of curbside recycling is not permanent. It's never been a process that we never envisioned as permanent. The Mayor very reluctantly accepted the recommendation to do it three months ago, and our goal is to bring it back as soon as possible.

The problem would be if we brought it back sooner than the labor resource issue is dealt with. Then we will simply be back where we were just a few months ago. In the charts that I send to you all every week or two, you will see that the very easy, very steady decline in missed collections from three and four thousands to hundreds since the implementation of that. It's absolutely certain that in the current environment, if we said we're bringing curbside back, you would see the overall missed collections across go through. And to the equation that John gave you: if you take recycling a couple times a month as the dollar amount set aside for that visit, that's about \$2.10 a month. Any [indecipherable] taxpayer money, we don't regard as inconsequential. But if we were to be rebating people for curbside, that would equate to a couple bucks a month, \$24 a year. So, if we went a year and sent everybody at the end of the year a \$24 check, I'm guessing that would not, certainly, appease the overall frustration. I think people want curbside collection more than they want \$2 a month.

CM FERRARO

No, no, that's exactly where they want to go, but people are paying. There's accountability. Do you get what I'm saying? So perhaps it needs to be called something different. Or the message needs to get out



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because I know we're getting calls left and right. People are stopping us in grocery stores and gas stations to ask us this. So, the messaging needs to get out, of exactly what you said. I think the yard waste pick up... you guys have done a great job compared to where it was. But we don't see anything happening on the recycling, and in fact, when residents are told that one bag of trash that goes into a recycling bin has just wasted the whole thing, we need to get the messaging out better.

And then like I said as far as where it's at, and I'd be happy to get with you on other locations other than parks, but people want to see, what is the end result. If it's going to be six months down the road, and if it's not able to hit the target, they just want to know. Because calling us and us not having all the information... and I'm going to tell you, I'm not reading all these emails that I'm getting from you because I get a thousand emails and I don't have the time. A phone call is good enough for me, to where I can, you know, talk with our constituents or in our meetings like that. We can get a lot more done and accomplished with a quick phone call than sending emails among emails.

So, we want to help support you, but I think the bottom line is people want to see us return to it and they want to know the mechanism of what's going to happen other than just hoping that we're gonna get more drivers.

HUGHES

The Mayor wants to see that too. And I can give you an arbitrary date... I can pick one out of thin air, if you like, and whether we hit that date or not, it won't matter because until the backend resource issue is fixed... We can bring curbside back if you all pass a resolution saying, 'We don't care about that, just bring curbside back,' we'll do it next week. And then a week later, yard waste, bulk waste, and trash we'll be back in the thousands of missed collections rather than a few hundred. So it's a balancing act right now until the underlying labor market resource issue—the people can do the work for the haulers and our city department—and I don't know the answer to that.

We've tried, as I said at the beginning, we tried a few CDL drivers, for overtime pay, firefighters, to help get more trucks out. We continue to try. We continue to do other things. We're looking at the economics. We have rate reviews coming up next month, but I can't tell you what the magic bullet is to make the labor market such that these folks can hire everybody they need to get work within the contract parameters at those prices, and we can fill all vacancies with the city. I simply can't give you an answer.

CM FERRARO

Okay, what about a number? Do we have a number of how many drivers we need? Is that really what we need is just the drivers? And if we know the number, then we can actually go from there.



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HUGHES

I welcome the haulers [to answer] and I'll finish up as it relates to the city.

CM FERRARO

Because that's something that we could put out there to our constituents. Is it something that you want us to say? Is there something that we can provide? You know, give them the choice? Because right now they feel like they're paying for something they're not getting. If we can explain this, it's gonna cost more, you know, whatever it is, so that we can put it out there. So, if any of the haulers have what they need as far as drivers? Feel free to answer.

DALBY

Sure, I'll start, Councilman, from Waste Management's perspective. At the worst of it, which was around early October for us, for this particular contract, we needed 18 drivers. We currently need 12 in order to fully staff all garbage, recycle, and yard waste routes.

CM FERRARO

And your district is?

DALBY

Waste Management and Advanced Disposal. So, basically, the western most portion of the city.

CM FERRARO

Ok, any other haulers?

SEARCY

I'll speak for Waste Pro. Right now... I'm in CM Boylan's district. Right now, we're sitting at 12 drivers short. When we speak of drivers, I want everybody to understand. We're six drivers short to run our routes currently. But to cover, say, vacation, callouts, COVID, things like that, really about 20. So, we can run and be okay and stay in compliance, but when we get hit with some of these other [indecipherable], that's when we [indecipherable]. So, to be honest, to give an honest answer, about 20 drivers.

CM FERRARO

Ok, anybody else?

O'BRIEN



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Meridian Waste. We service your district, as well as many others, Councilman. We are currently fully staffed. We do have a number of drivers out currently on COVID. Part of that is they're testing positive and/or they've been exposed. So, we are following CDC guidelines in regards to exposure to COVID as well, but we are fully staffed. When we started the contract October 1st, we did one day of recycling that Friday, and then the program stopped. We have our recycling trucks ready to implement when the city asks us to move forward with that. We have those drivers.

We are currently looking at all of our routes, every day. I think that's a difference that you're seeing in your garbage and yard waste, in your district in particular, but we do certainly have restraints when hiring CDLs. Currently, as I said, we are fully staffed. We do have certain drivers that are out due to COVID issues. But we'll continue to always recruit safe CDL drivers, but it is an issue that we see, not only in our contract here in the city of Jacksonville, but throughout our other six states [indecipherable].

CM CARLUCCI

If I could interject just real quick, with respect. Our Council Vice President Terrance Freeman has just joined us. Thank you for being here. We're doing question and answer for us up here right now.

CM FERRARO

My point being is, I'm thinking that if 34 drivers is the difference of us being able to pick up the recycling for the city. If we're able to have that. Is that what's holding us up? Let's just say 50. Let me throw out a bigger number, 50 people is why we're holding back from being able to make this work.

HUGHES

It's one of the constraints. Again, some of the things that we're dealing with are exacerbated by COVID. As was mentioned, even if you plug the vacancies with a dozen drivers, if you have a COVID outbreak in that company, you'll end up for several weeks on rolling quarantines. Prior to COVID, you'll remember, there was a waystation or a transfer station conversation with the City Council, and folks came from the neighborhood and expressed their disinterest. We have windshield time issues where the amount of time that certain areas are from, are very far away from our landfills. The route stops if the truck is full. It stops mid-route and ends up spending an hour and a half to two hours to get back and forth from the landfill. That impacts the collection of the route. Under the extent that we had during COVID. But it was an issue that was leading us to come to City Council to talk about at least one additional transfer station that ended up not happening because the company, the landowner, willing to sell... and the neighboring community...

CM FERRARO

I get that. I get all that.



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HUGHES

So, that's one of the things, a transfer station, would help us long term to deal with windshield time, which would ultimately impact routes [indecipherable].

CM FERRARO

I get that, but we do have areas of town not owned by the city that we could do that. So, looking at a shortage of people—50 people—and some spots that we may have some [transfer stations]. So, I'd be happy to work with you guys offline on here, but we have properties that we could be doing that with right now, not City. Yeah, that are not City. Commercial properties that could be used instead of the neighborhoods. So, we do have these things that we could do. So, we'd be happy to work with you guys on this. That got me the numbers I wanted. Thank you.

CM CARLUCCI

Thank you, Councilman Ferraro. Vice President Freeman, do you have questions?

CM FREEMAN

[head shake]

CM CARLUCCI

I've got some questions that might really be more in the form of a suggestion to see if it can be done, for transparency purposes and communication. Because I haven't found it and we looked for it. Why is it that our city website, Solid Waste Division pages online, aren't displaying current information? Why not display updates to help manage citizens' expectations? Why not display monthly collection data? And why not display information about industry challenges both locally and nationally? And I think, you know, I mean, the more information we get out there, the better. But I don't see we that it's out there at all. So, if that's something we can integrate into those respective pages...

HUGHES

Yes, sir. I think it's a good suggestion. I'll have our public affairs team look into the current website and look into ways we can get it updated faster and with better information.

CM CARLUCCI

Yeah, almost like a dashboard, in a way. Now, the other thing is, what I tried to get an idea of as far as the fines that were levied and so forth... Aside from the fines, are we paying the haulers the same amount of money contracted even though they might be given reduced services. Not to criticize, but I'm just saying, you know, if the services are less and we paid the same amount of money... you get what I'm saying, Mr. Pappas or Mr. Hughes?



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HUGHES

These two [gestures] can give you the best answer.

PAPPAS

Certainly. When recycling was... actually let me start with when we added the yard waste facility on the East side, we reduced one of the haulers who is utilizing that because now the distance they have to drive is less, and certainly it reduced fuel as well. So, payment was reduced to reflect that reduced distance. And then also, when recycling was suspended, we reduced two of the haulers to reflect not making those pickups. There is increased volume in the garbage side—because of those who don't wish to take it [recycling] to the temporary facilities or sites are now putting it all in the garbage—so we have to accommodate that. But there was a reduction for that.

The third, the newer hauler, just began their efforts and quite frankly inherited some challenges. We didn't feel like it was appropriate at that time to reduce that. They had to pick up a great deal of challenges [indecipherable].

CM CARLUCCI

So, here's somewhat of a more nuanced question. We have our Council auditors here. With talks of refunds and so forth, and it doesn't look like it would be that big a refund that would be worth sending out. But it is a fee that folks are paying, a fee for service. And right now, we're not charging enough fee. Our garbage fee is not enough to cover the cost of our garbage collection. So, where it has fallen short, because we haven't raised the garbage fee for probably eight years maybe, you know, we've been supplementing that with general fund dollars. And so, now we have a loan. Because state law says that if we do not get our fees back up to the actual cost of the services, that needs to be maybe around 75-85%, then the money that has been supplemented by the General Fund, our ad valorem taxes have to be paid back. And that would mean an increase in the fee.

So, my question is, in a way that might help, is there a way that any fines or dollars that are reduced because of the lack of service that has been paid, could be put towards this loan? This looming loan that we have because we can't seem to muster up the votes to get that fee up to where it's supposed to be. And every year we delay increasing the fee, which increases the loan that has to be paid back by the eventual increase in fees. I think our loan is about \$29 million right now. Are there any dollars that we're saving through any of this and perhaps combining with fines that could be put toward that loan?

Brian, uh, Mr. Hughes, you may know the answer to that and I got our trusty Council auditors in the back and who are right here [gestures]. I'm sorry, Ms. Taylor, I can see Mr. Peterson back there. But is that



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something that we could do? Because, in a way, that would be a future rate reduction.

TAYLOR

Yes, sir. I think what you have considered too, and really we're on the same page with the Administration on this. A lot of times we don't agree on things. But with the general fund already subsidizing this, what you have a look at is, right now, where you have [indecipherable] damages and you're paying the contractors less, for instance, at MBRC just this past Monday, some of that savings is being utilized to pay the overtime for the core, the city employees, to help cover those costs. But you will absolutely see, if it, for some reason, was not needed to pay overtime or utilized in that way. You'd have less cost and at the end of the year, [indecipherable] we'll short out. And if there's less that needs to be transferred from that loan, it will, in essence, get reduced through that cost savings. So, it's almost like an automatic when we look at the recapture that we do. So, anytime when we send general fund dollars out, we always look at those every year. Any time that we can recoup, and then that in essence we reduce, or go towards reducing, that loan. But right now, because the overtime cost, some of that savings is being used to help out.

CM CARLUCCI

Well, politically, and with constituents being stretched, the fee hasn't been increased. It wouldn't be that big a fee increase, but we haven't done that. I'm not being critical, that's just the policy the Council has, and I guess the Administration have joined in. But sooner or later, that's going to be the elephant in the room and we're all going to be going [ahhhh!]. So, anything we can do to defray that increase cost in future would, in fact, be somewhat a way of returning dollars back to those who are paying fees but not getting services. Go ahead, Brian.

HUGHES

There'd be an alternative to that. And it's... I'm speaking now without having vetted the the policy with the mayor. So, this is not the mayor's position. Collapse the Enterprise Fund. Let people keep that solid waste fee and do solid waste collections out of the general fund. And each year budget what you need to get the garbage picked up. And if it goes up or down next year, adjust next year's budget accordingly, and stop creating a scenario where it's...

CM CARLUCCI

Are you saying do away with the fee and just collecting through ad valorem? Is that what you're saying?

HUGHES



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I'm saying do away with the fee because you collapsed, stopped, the Enterprise Fund, and you simply handle solid waste in the general fund budget. If you want to keep taking the fee from them, you can. If you don't want it to take the fee, then you deal with that in ad valorem.

CM CARLUCCI

Just one little comment on that. That's how it used to be done years ago. Everybody thought garbage pickup was free. We had a mayor say, 'Throw your trash out on the curb. It's free. We'll pick it up.' Then people started, like, tearing garages down and putting out on the curb to get picked up. But one of the reasons they came up with the fee—and I think it was Mayor Peyton—was because the [Florida] Legislature is, all the time, and even as we speak, trying to limit the amount of ad valorem taxes that we can bring in. And there's a proposal by a member of the House, from here in Jacksonville, who's got some kind of another cap. Another ad valorem cap. But they can't mess with our fees. So, you know, with the stormwater fee, with the garbage fee, with the fee on JEA, the franchise fee, the state Legislature can't mess with that. So those are revenue streams that kind of help us diversify our ability to collect and pay for services.

HUGHES

You asked about the refunds. The easiest way to get people a refund would be to collapse the enterprise fund, deal with it in general fund, and then stop taking those enterprise fees off the top, and deal with it with ad valorem. Then if you have to make the case to convince the state Legislature in the process, so be it. Just pay what it costs.

CM CARLUCCI

The cost is the cost. It doesn't matter whether it comes from fees or ad valorem taxes. But anyway, I understand what you're saying. Let me pass it on to anybody else. Council Vice President Freeman, you've been waiting down there patiently, you just got here. So perhaps you've got some questions, and then we're going to cut our questions and answers at 11. And then we will take some public comments which we will get as many as we can, but there will be town meetings to get more of those, that will be centered around comments from the public. But Mr. Vice President?

CVP FREEMAN

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning. My apologies for my tardiness. I have one question that will kind of stem into maybe a few others. But I'm sure all my colleagues, and this is, Mr. Chair, to the Administration. I spoke with Gerrie this morning to receive calls, questions from constituents to know what is our responsibility. We've all given a variety of responses, I'm sure. As we're all intimately involved and engaged from a district perspective with our constituents, and myself as an At-Large. We tend to get calls from all over the city.



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My question to the Administration, and maybe this was discussed prior to my arriving, is: what is the consistent messaging that you're sharing? And what is the messaging that you would encourage us to share in order to be consistent to what you're saying? And then the follow up to that would be, is there a realistic timeframe that we can share? A timeline, with constituents, to offer hope. Because I think, my sentiment is, that many of the conversations I'm in, they're starting to lose hope in this process. And that's heartbreaking because we understand, you know, the circumstances that we're dealing with. But, and maybe again, I might have missed something, but is there a realistic timeframe that we can look to offer?

HUGHES

It depends on what you're telling them you're hoping for. If the hope is that we're curbside recycling again, the timeline for that is indefinite and at the soonest possible date that doesn't contribute to impacts on the other three streams. So, it was discussed earlier: we do bulk, we do garbage, we do yard waste, we do recycling. And pretty much we prioritize those [indecipherable]. So, with recycling suspended at the curbside, that's a lot of information that I share every couple weeks. You see the charting. Missed collections go from thousands to hundreds. If we bring [back] curbside recycling without addressing the other issues, bring it back, you will see that trend go back up and then we will have increased complaints about garbage pickup, yard waste. So, an arbitrary timeline to bring back curbside recycling... I can set a date and probably, likely, miss it. We're continuing to work with the haulers and our department to try to get some certainty from the haulers that now we're ready to bring back curbside, and it's great to hear Meridian. I looked at Meridian to see zero missed collections, at least it's what I'm hearing, based on staffing.

So, the short answer: we'll bring it back as soon as possible because it's a priority for the mayor to get us back to a place where we can have consistent service across all four streams. Rather than take one down and see the others be [indecipherable].

CVP FREEMAN

Yeah, thank you so much. I appreciate that. I'm just kind of a numbers guy and often times those numbers will afford you the opportunity to create a predictable model. And I was just hoping that I could maybe gather something from that [indecipherable]. But through the Chair to Meridian, I heard you say that you're fully, your staffing is of a size that you're able—and I don't want to misspeak—that you're collecting? I know your area is the Northside. Do you have the capacity to expand and do more? Is there... am I crossing into some type of contractual... I'm just trying to... I guess the question is: what's your secret sauce? Or maybe it's proprietary, [laughter] but if you're able to do it, then the challenge will be for the others. You know, is there a model that you figured out that maybe can be shared and others join in and follow behind? On behalf of our citizens. I understand business and I understand challenges,



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and trust me, I understand COVID and the challenge that it's creating our country and our world. But somehow you all managed to do something that I hadn't heard from the others. Can you share maybe?

O'BRIEN

What I would say in regards to, we have a certain designated area and we started that up on October 1. We knew we had to overstaff. We had to hire more CDL drivers than the actual slots that we had for all positions, because remember, on October 1, we were still collecting recycling at that time, too. So, what we did is we went out and literally, in a very short period, we mobilized and were able to hire the drivers, and then some, in order to fill the positions. Of course, we always know that there are some dropouts.

CVP FREEMAN

Question: if you started October 1, when did you all start your hiring process? What was the timeline?

O'BRIEN

We were given 39 days, from the date the contract was started to October 1. We had a general sense 60 days in advance that we would...

CVP FREEMAN

So, within the last several months, you all have managed to find drivers?

O'BRIEN

Yes, yes.

CVP FREEMAN

Mr. Hughes? Mr. Williams?

WILLIAMS

Council Vice President, let me be clear. There's no one in this room who... no one is perfect. So, Meridian has about 2000 complaints, but we're not holding that against them because we said we would give them six months. So, they came in and mobilized, and I don't have any 'friends' in here, okay? I like everybody. So, they [Meridian] came in. They crippled Waste Management, okay? A lot of those drivers came from Waste Management. So that's why we're having issues with Waste Management. They only got a few drivers from Waste Pro. Waste Pro is still managing to [indecipherable].

CVP FREEMAN



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Are their wages the same?

WILLIAMS

The wages are not the same. So, you have a new contract coming in... that's the difference.

HUGHES

I can add to that. So, because that contract area went back out to bid, the bids that came back, which there were only two, the bids that came back were able to account for the recent labor market issues. And when the contract was signed, they had the opportunity to go with, in some cases, better [indecipherable...]

CVP FREEMAN

Where are those provider contracts? I'm just trying to see how closely...

HUGHES

We have rate reviews coming up next month. And as I said at the beginning, you weren't here yet, I anticipate hearing about the labor challenges and some of the other things in the rate review process that might get the contractors back to equal footing. But again, any increase to the other two areas beyond, those increases are going to increase the expenditures coming out of the enterprise fund for solid waste and will likely increase the supplemental general fund.

CM CARLUCCI

If I may quickly ask one question and it kind of dovetails with CM Ferraro. Everybody up here has business experience. He does, and I have 41 years now of business experience, and I've had more than my fair share of challenges. And I know I'm sure Mr. Ferraro has too, and you have to have a business plan. I have not heard anything about a business plan that's been developed to try to execute to solve the problem. And we just keep tracking things and saying, you know, we don't have any drivers and there are staffing issues. Where's the business plan? Is anybody writing or putting together a business plan to solve this problem because we can either... well, I've been in a position when I was sinking, and I decided I could swim, or I could sink. And I decided to swim. But I had to put together a really good business plan and then I had to execute it. And thank the good Lord, my family is back where we wanted to be. It took some time, just like what we're having to do, get through a bad time, but where is the business plan? And can we tell our constituents they are working on a business plan to solve this problem, instead of just trying to reach out and give \$5000 bonuses, and this, that, and the other. Let's execute a business plan.



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HUGHES

I'll let the private contractor talk about their plans based on the contracts. From the city's perspective, the business plan is created by our legal framework. We have four regions: one of them served by the City. So, I have a business plan that's called the budget, which is working with Will and John Pappas to budget for years out related to the Solid Waste Division under Public Works. The business plan that the City has with the other three is a contract. And recently, we didn't like how one contract was going. So, we used in that contract, our right to take it back out to bid. We got two people come in. One was selected through a procurement process. They're sitting at that table. They have a multi-year contract to do the business we hired them to do. Two other providers that are still operating under a little bit older contract, but those contracts allow for rate reviews periodically. Those two have rate reviews coming up in February. It is likely, on our end, that we'll have to analyze their proposals for rate increases to those contracts based on the current labor market.

CM CARLUCCI

Those should be backed up by business plans. Okay, listen, I'm sorry to cut you off. I appreciate what you're saying. And I don't have time to allow these haulers to respond to that because it's public comment. To me, that's the most important time. If you want to stick around afterwards and talk to anybody about your business plans and what you're doing, that would be fine.

But right now, I want to, if that's okay with my colleagues here, to go to our public comment because this thing is supposed to be over at 11:15. So, let me, before we get to the public, just thank everybody for being here. I think the Administration and the haulers have been a good job in trying to address our questions. I thank my colleagues for being here. So, Sheri, can we go ahead?

WEBBER

Yeah. So, Ms. Byrd, are you still here? Okay, if you'll come on up here and use this microphone.

CM CARLUCCI

I think we're just going for two minutes. To get as many people in as we can. I'm sorry. I wish we could do more, but we're trying to get a lot in in limited time. Go ahead, Ms. Byrd.

BYRD

Good morning, my name is Robin Byrd. Good morning, Councilpersons. I'll take one mask off. I'm longhauler and I understand that we're supposed to be complying with the CDC guidelines so I'm going to wear one mask.

CM CARLUCCI



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Yes, ma'am. Pull that microphone done toward you.

BYRD

Okay. So many things to say, you know. [indecipherable] Waste haulers, you guys are missing some really amazing opportunities in this city. There's temporary sites that people can take their waste to, and their recycling, and it's been mentioned about needing to get the message out to properly recycle. This is where you guys are missing it. These temporary sites? Too few, too late. But now there's been [indecipherable] and people go down there and they dump the recycling and they make a mess and then it has to be cleaned up. Well, you people look like very nice people. You look like you could help with the public and have these sites manned. This is your opportunity. You're building goodwill with the people of Jacksonville. Or trying to rebuild it. You're reassuring them that you're moving forward. Reassure them that what they are putting in those dumpsters will be recycled, not go to the landfill. I'm not saying when the people pull up to onload for them. Greet them, 'Hi how are you? We're so glad you're here. We're so glad you're bringing your recycling.' Instruct them, 'Oh, it's in plastic bags. You just take them up there, rip that bag open, and let everything go into the dumpster.' And have a full trash can there for people to put those plastic bags. Instruct them. Sure, you write down [indecipherable]. Anything that you see that should not go in the recycling, ask them, when you take this and put it out for your regular trash pickup. There won't be messes. There won't be any of that. And you don't really, I believe, are putting regular people out there that actually do the physical work of picking up this stuff. Those aren't the people you want manning those sites. Who you want there are people that will [indecipherable] towards customer service. When they get ready to leave, when people are finished, when they get ready to leave, go up to them. [indecipherable] part of what can be recycled. Hand them that [indecipherable] and hand them a heavy duty trash bag. Now that trash bag may not seem like anything to you...

CM CARLUCCI

Ms. Byrd, I'm so sorry, I don't want to cut you off, but we're at two minutes. I think you're suggestions are great and I think the haulers would be very open to that. But we need to go to our next speaker.

BYRD

Can I make one more comment please?

CM CARLUCCI

Quickly.

BYRD



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Okay. In regards to accountability and transparency, we're still in the middle of this. but already there's been talk of moving money out of the waste management or waste hauler fund into the General fund. And what I have seen is that that money in the general fund is basically up for grabs.

CM CARLUCCI

That's a good point, and I'm going to have to let you stop there. But I couldn't have said that better myself.

WEBBER

Miss Tucker, are you still here? Okay, come on up.

TUCKER

Hi, I'm representing Consequences Incorporated and actually my son is a Fletcher high school student who is taking his AP exam right now. And so, he was the one who was to be here. I am part of the board and he had me write something to share with you all. We have started petition, and I have the QR code if anybody is interested in signing it right now. We have over 1500 signatures supporting bringing back curbside recycling. We are a local nonprofit founded to generate awareness about climate change. And encourage awareness of reducing, reusing, and recycling and we saw this as an opportunity to really jump out there. And because I think we all care about our environment, and we all want to care about how stopping recycling will impact the future generations. We want to bring back... well, the first thing we started to do was pop-up recycling events and put it in certain communities so if people weren't able to get their recycling to the sites, we helped with that process. We also started the petition I mentioned.

I believe, part of our issue we'd like to present and encourage is to integrate a lot of what Robin was saying and that's marketing and social media support, guidelines, so that people also understand. When you make a big change like this, people also have to understand the process and guidelines. Yes, it may be on the website, but people aren't always going to take the time to do that. I will mention on Christmas Eve we spent six hours, started at Castaway Island Preserve, and followed the truck for six hours. We found that the drivers work very hard, spent 45 minutes to an hour just cleaning up around the dumpsters. I have videos showing this. They're spending their time just constantly catching up on themselves and not even able to take half of it away. So, adding more is... the bottom line is, we're only catching a fraction of the recycling at these sites. And then on top of that, we're trashing our parks, which also is not an appropriate place for the recycling.

But we're here to support, also encourage. We have the petition at all the centers, the 14, and we've also put up some guidelines because we're trying to help people understand how to do it, how to recycle. So that's pretty much why we're here. Thank you for your time and just want to let you know



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that we're also here to support the environment and the future leaders. So, these are all high school students that are running this and they will be here tomorrow at 12 o'clock also to do another protest.

CM CARLUCCI

Well, thank you. This is what love about public comment because you come up with so many great ideas. Thank you. Thank your son on behalf of the Council for his efforts and yours and all those involved. That's our future generation. Are there any other speakers?

WEBBER

I don't have any other cards.

CM CARLUCCI

Are there any other cards?

HUNT

I don't know how this works. I'm sorry.

CM CARLUCCI

Well, come on up. It's alright if you're from the public. You have two minutes. You can fill out the card afterwards and hand it in.

HUNT

Yes, sir. My name is Paige Hunt. I am a lifetime resident of Jacksonville. I came to this meeting out of frustration, sat here and listened about staffing and all these reasons. I guess all the reasons were given as to why trash collection and recycle isn't being done. But out of those 'thousands down to hundreds' that are being missed, I'm one of them. I have six different tickets that have been open with the City of Jacksonville about missed collection that started back in November. It was collected at the end of November and missed the entire month of December. I have footage of them driving past my house and missing the collection. None of the reasons that were given [indecipherable] explain any of that.

CM CARLUCCI

Where do you live?

HUNT

Paxon. We're actually part of the [indecipherable] program. But six different tickets that have been closed and said it had been collected. I have photographed evidence that says otherwise. I also have video evidence of the truck driving past my house, not once but twice last week on my regular



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collection day. My house was missed. This is a public health issue. And, no, we don't want some \$25 refund check because you're right, that will absolutely incense the people who are not being serviced. Because it is way more than \$25 in frustration that we have endured. But something's got to give. I understand that Meridian may have gotten a better price for their bid, but they obviously have something going differently, in their favor. Maybe it's time to take notes. I understand you're competitors and I understand that's probably not what you want to hear, but obviously Meridian has something that's different. In a good way. You have people that drivers are bailing out on other companies to go to Meridian, there's probably a reason for it. I don't know what else to say other than this has got to change because the citizens are fed up with it.

HUGHES

Understood, and Mr. Carlucci, if I could ask her to sit with Mr. Williams afterwards. Just so you know, if the truck goes by there is a possibility that the truck is full and has to go to the landfill. If the truck is full, it has to go unload. And that's why, when we talk about business plans and longterm strategies, transfer stations will become so important.

HUNT

Understood. Thank you for your time.

CM CARLUCCI

Well, I want to thank you for coming at the last minute. We tried to get the word out the best we could and so forth. But, you know, for you to come after hearing about it somehow this morning and be here, I really appreciate it. I am so proud of this community and the fact that they are dedicated to recycling. I think that says a lot about the people of Jacksonville and how they care about our environment, how they care about this very important problem with solid waste.

Any other members of the public that would like to speak? Okay, any Council members want to say anything on the way out?

CM FERRARO

Appreciate the Administration, appreciate the haulers coming here and I look forward to working with you.

CM CARLUCCI

Vice President Freeman?

CM BOYLAN



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Again, I want to say thank you to the staff for their participation in our town hall meeting last night, and thank you, Mr. Carlucci, for bringing this meeting together. I think informing and educating is really what it's all about and the opportunity for the Administration, and all of us, to talk about these challenges and the opportunity we've heard about today, I think is only going to help us move forward. Thank you.

WEBBER

Sir, if I could just add real quick: there are several handouts that Public Works brought with them today. To that point, data, education. Yes, Sir. They're all on this table over here.

CM CARLUCCI

If you need any of the data or information, it's out there. And I would say take it. I want to thank everybody for being here. And I think this was an informative meeting. We're not pointing fingers. We're just trying to see how we're going to get through this year and make things better. Because that's what our citizens deserve, and I know everybody here believes that. This meeting is adjourned.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>

Meeting Adjourned: 11:15 AM

Minutes: Prepared by Sheri Webber, Executive Council Assistant – At-Large, Group 4, 904-255-5159, swebber@coj.net

The written minutes for this meeting are an approximation of what was discussed and are not legally binding. This meeting was streamed live through the City Council website. Remarks were transcribed by A.I. and may not be verbatim.