

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**Special Committee on Solid Waste**

**February 17, 2022**

**10:00 a.m.**

Meeting Convened: 10:00 am Meeting Adjourned: 11:18 am

Attendance: CM Salem (Chair), CM Morgan (Vice Chair), CM Carlucci, CM White, CP Newby

Also: Kim Taylor and Phillip Peterson Auditor’s Office; Richard Distel, Council Research

Council President Newby thanked the members of the committee for their service, and he thanked the Mayor for announcing the resumption of curbside recycling collection in April. CP Newby thanked CM Carlucci for getting conversation started on solid waste and recycling.

Chair Salem said the committee meetings will start with invited presentations on topics of about half an hour, followed by council member discussion in the space of half an hour, then a wrap-up by the Chair with findings and issues, then a public comment period. Chair Salem introduced the representatives of the franchise waste haulers and the recycling processing facility in attendance at the meeting.

Brian Hughes, Chief Administrative Officer, said that the COVID pandemic exacerbated a service level that was beginning to deteriorate before the pandemic hit due to overall labor and economic conditions. The suspension of the curbside recycling program has allowed the haulers to catch up on the backlog of other types of waste pickups which will allow recycling collections to resume in early April. That resumption does not mean that all problems have been solved and conditions will go back to normal. Mr. Hughes said that the administration is considering whether to continue as an enterprise fund function or collapse the enterprise fund and use the General Fund because it can be seen as a fundamental public service funded by the General Fund.

Joey Greive, Chief Financial Officer, detailed the $30 million loan from General Fund which has resulted from $73 million in revenue to the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund with costs are $108M. Mr. Greive said that currently there is $41 million in user fee revenue and $53 million in cost for hauler contracts.

John Pappas gave a presentation on recycling which covered the MRF contract held b Republic Services and the city’s previous contract. Mr. Pappas talked about the revenue and costs to the city, and the impact China has had on the revenue. Mr. Pappas talked about the recycling stream, saying that cardboard and paper volume is increasing substantially; plastic increasing somewhat; glass increasing in recent year.

Mr. Pappas said that glass is a negative value that costs more to recycle than to dispose. Mr. Pappas recommendations to improve efficiency is citizen education on recycling and removing glass from recycled items list.

Brian Hughes stated that looking at the full cost/benefit analysis it shows that recycling is not a money maker, but that doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be done. He said that they must factor in lots of things in terms of the cost.

Chair Salem said he thinks we need to do an annual analysis of the recycling stream and what is worth doing and what isn’t. Mr. Hughes said that they do a periodic analysis, but it would be problematic to change what is and is not recyclable in terms of public understanding and participation. Chair Salem asked who can make the call to eliminate glass? Mr. Hughes said that the administration can, but he would want to be collaborative with the Council in this process.

Chair Salem asked what kind of marketing the MRF operator does? Mr. Pappas said their marketing is focused on selling the products and it is on the city to inform the public about what can and can’t go in the recycling stream.

CM Morgan said that education is lacking in lots of solid waste areas. She suggested a simple sticker that could go on the recycle bins with dos and don’ts that could be distributed everywhere (town hall meetings, libraries, the recycling truck drivers, etc.). Mr. Hughes thinks that giving the haulers another task would be counterproductive at this point but said he will look at all kinds of options. CM Morgan said there could there be an avenue for entrepreneurs to use the glass that would make it worth recycling. Mr. Hughes said this wouldn’t work with the MRF model; they can’t get anything for it, and it costs a lot to collect and tip at the MRF because it’s so heavy. Mr. Hughes said they haven’t eliminated it already because there are non-cost considerations and other societal values in play in making the decision.

Chair Salem asked who takes non-recyclables from the MRF to the landfill? Mr. Pappas said that Republic is the MRF operator. Chair Salem has asked Republic to come to the next meeting to list the most problematic materials they get.

CM Carlucci asked how much capacity ds the city have left at Trail Ridge? Mr. Pappas said it is approximately 30 years. Carlucci said it would be hard to stop recycling glass because it’s been an integral part of recycling for so long.

CM White agreed with the administration’s recommendation that glass should be eliminated and that the public should be informed of that before recycling comes back in April. Mr. Hughes said he would lay out a timeline of all the factors involved in changing the recycling stream.

Public Comment

Carnell Oliver said the solid waste fee is the key to the problem.

Dave Bruderle, a retired professional engineer with decades of solid waste experience, said that policy (federal, state and local) is what frames market demand for recycled materials.

CM Morgan would like to hear from solid waste truck drivers at a future meeting about what the job is like at ground level.

Minutes: Richard Distel, Council Research

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