



SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SOLID WASTE

FINAL REPORT

Committee Members

CM Ronald Salem, Chair

CM Joyce Morgan, Vice Chair

CM Randy White

CM Matt Carlucci

CM Reginald Gaffney

The Special Committee on Solid Waste Meetings

February 17, 2022

March 3, 2022

March 17, 2022

April 7, 2022

April 21, 2022

May 5, 2022

The Special Committee on Solid Waste was formed to examine and develop strategies to respond to a variety of challenges and difficulties with the collection of solid waste and recycling in the City of Jacksonville.

The Special Committee was charged to perform an in-depth and comprehensive examination of the City's solid waste and recyclables collection system; to analyze its strengths and weaknesses (both in the short term and long term), to examine potential options, practices and systems to improve the capacity and performance of current solid waste and recycling systems; to examine best practices and new technologies being applied in other jurisdictions that might offer practical means for improved operations. To examine whether there are any changes needed to the services and service levels currently offered; and to study how best to fund the solid waste and recycling operations to reliably achieve the desired service level in the most cost- effective manner.

The first meeting on February 17, 2022 covered the revenues and expenses related to solid waste and recycling operations. Brian Hughes, Chief Administrative Officer, discussed the impacts COVID-19 had on the overall labor and economic conditions as well as the costs associated with solid waste. Joey Greive, Chief Financial Officer, detailed the annual loans from General Fund to subsidize the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund because of the revenue shortfall from the solid waste user fee and the liability that has accumulated for that fund over the years. Public Works Director John Pappas gave a presentation on recycling which covered the materials recovery facility (MRF) recycling contract held by Republic Services and discussed which recyclables have current market value and which do not.

The second meeting on March 3rd focused on recycling and the issues the solid waste haulers are facing. Bill Brinkley of Republic Services made a PowerPoint presentation giving an overview of the biggest challenges they face in recycling at the MRF. Mr. Brinkley stressed education as a key factor in making sure the public is aware of what is recyclable and what is not. He said that issues regarding material quality and contamination are important to make sure the items can be recycled and stressed that plastic bags never belong in the recycling stream. Mr. Brinkley also talked about the issues with glass and the need for simplicity in recycling. Mr. Hughes showed an education video featuring the mayor that discusses recycling. He talked about the educational effort from the City and how COVID-19 impacted that effort, and discussed the new Waste Wizard app that will help to educate the public in their homes in real time on what items are recyclable.

The third meeting on March 17th detailed the purpose of a solid waste transfer station and its benefits to the City as well as discussing transfer vehicles and the improvements this system can have on collection, landfill disposal and improving safety. Steve Diebenow, representing Waste Pro USA, gave a presentation which covered the history of the current transfer station RFP process, entitlements, the change in contract with the City to reflect the alternate site, and the time to design, construct and become operable in that location. Mr. Hughes talked about the importance of identifying a viable location, recognizing that there will inevitably be some community opposition to almost any site suggested.

The fourth meeting on April 7th reviewed the history of the solid waste user fee. Trisha Bowles of the Office of General Counsel explained what legislation would be required to alter the fee and the different processes required under the Ordinance Code to raise the fee up to \$18 per month or to raise it above \$18, which would take additional steps. Council Auditor Kim Taylor described options for raising the fee, for paying back the accumulated liability in the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund, and the potential impact of the various options on the City's interlocal agreements (ILAs) with the Beaches cities and Town of Baldwin. Those jurisdictions have provisions in their ILAs that impact on whether they pay tipping fees on their residential waste disposal at the Trail Ridge Landfill depending on how the City of Jacksonville funds its solid waste collection operations. Joey Greive reviewed the accumulation of the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund loan and Brian Hughes discussed the complications involved in paying off the loan with regard to the impact the different methods have on the ILAs.

The fifth meeting on April 21st covered the possibility of eliminating the solid waste fee and rolling the expense into the General Fund. The mayors of Atlantic Beach and Neptune Beach, Ellen Glasser and Elaine Brown, respectively, expressed their opposition to the fee elimination plan, noting that it would effectively be double taxation for Beaches residents and said that Jacksonville Beach mayor Christine Hoffman shared that opposition. John Pappas gave a presentation on the status of the three solid waste hauler contracts with Meridian Waste, Waste Management and Waste Pro USA. There was a discussion regarding service area size and how that impacts performance. Mr. Pappas said the hauler rate review process provided for in Section 382.309, *Ordinance Code* takes place every three years and is currently underway, examining each hauler's number of residences served, operating expenses, projected expenses, rate of return, contractor reserves, and the administration's recommendations. There was a discussion regarding service area size and how that impacts performance. Representatives of two of the three haulers indicated a preference for larger service areas.

The sixth and final meeting on May 5th discussed landfill operations, residential collection operations, and recycling operations. John Pappas described the landfill gas collection and energy generation system at the Trail Ridge Landfill and the need to expand that system to newly developed landfill cells in the future. He described the leachate collection and disposal system and JEA's desire for the City to find a disposal method other than trucking the leachate to the Buckman Wastewater Treatment Plant because of the operational problems that material causes for the plant. The landfill operators are testing a leachate evaporator system that substantially reduces the liquid volume and allows the remaining solids to be sprayed back onto the working face of the landfill. Mr. Pappas also discussed the pros and cons of incinerating solid waste to produce energy instead of landfilling. While it reduces landfillable wastes by 80-90%, saves landfill space, reduces the leachate treatment issue and generates energy, the method also has a high capital cost, would require a higher tipping fee, is more difficult and time-consuming to obtain permits, and poses higher regulatory compliance costs, primarily for air quality control.

Mr. Pappas reviewed the benefits and drawbacks of automated waste collection systems (hydraulic tipper arms) on the collection vehicles. On the positive side, automated collection requires fewer workers, incurs fewer injuries and therefore fewer workers' compensation claims, and increases collection speed. On the negative side, the methods requires higher capital costs for purchase and repair of the standardized carts for each premises, not all allowable waste types fit into the carts meaning that a separate bulk waste collection route is required, there are more mechanical breakdowns due to the hydraulic mechanisms, and the automated collection vehicles are not compatible with non-automated yard waste collection.

Mr. Pappas also discussed the benefits and drawbacks of converting to compressed natural gas (CNG) collection vehicles and described the Waste Wizard computer and mobile phone app that provides immediate, hands-on information to customers about what items are and are not recyclable. The app also has a calendar feature that helps residents know what day their garbage and recyclables will be collected and can provide push notifications of any changes to the calendar.

The committee also talked about the positive work towards minimizing complaints that has been done by the Public Works Department and the haulers.

Recommendations

February 17th 2022

- Continue discussions regarding recycling glass by providing a product that meets the needs of the market.
- Explore additional steps to raise the profit margin for glass, including use of local producers that utilize recycled glass.

March 3rd 2022

- Public Works Department to provide TEU with annual review of current market conditions for glass and other recyclable items, including the reexamination of past committee efforts to address historic concerns.
- Provide significant education to citizens on proper curbside recycling
- Provide funding for recycling education with the annual budget
- Explore a process to encourage apartments, condos, and businesses to recycle
- Implement the Waste Wizard app
- Encourage use of city website for curbside recycling information

March 17th 2022

- Support of the transfer station and find ways to expedite the process
- Use odor suppressants to minimize smell

April 7th 2022

- Explore differential solid waste fees based on size of property / amount of trash cans
- Explore the Council Auditor's suggestions for solid waste fee options, including consideration of implementation of automatic price escalation, based on CPI or other formulas.

April 21st 2022

- Educate the public that recycling doesn't go in plastic bags

May 5th 2022

- Explore incinerators, to minimize need for landfill space
- Explore large scale composting / encourage composting / saving landfill space