

5.02: Consider Goals of Recycling Program

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report, noting the City is in year four of a five-year contract with Ace Solid Waste for curbside collection of recyclable materials. The purpose of this case is to review the goals developed related to the City's recycling program and discuss policy direction once the current contract expires. The focus is on the City's current organized curbside recycling contract and does not contemplate extending organized collection into solid waste disposal.

City Planner Anderson described three options: enter into negotiations with the current service provider to extend the contract; prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) for competitive bids for curbside collection of recyclables; or migrate to an open hauling system.

City Planner Anderson noted that last month, the Board discussed several goals including maximizing recyclable materials covered, public education and marketing, customer service, and expanding the program to include new materials. Based on that discussion, staff drafted a document to address these objectives and also provide basic background information about the community, current recycling program, and County/State recycling objectives through 2030. City Planner Anderson read the list of program goals.

Board Member Anderson asked whether these goals would be placed into an RFP process.

City Planner Anderson answered in the affirmative, indicating the goals could be included in an RFP to define what the City wants to accomplish in the contract if the City opted to issue an RFP.

Board Member Hiatt stated 90% of residents participate in the recycling program and with that in mind, he thinks a higher priority should be to improve recycling quantity for those 90% instead of trying to capture the remaining 10%, which may be difficult to do.

City Planner Anderson agreed that the City will find more success by providing more education for the 90% who already actively recycle about all the different materials that can be recycled.

Board Member Hiatt noted the staff report already addresses broadening the recycling program.

Board Member Anderson asked about the organics program.

City Planner Anderson explained that haulers who offer organics typically use separate trucks from the yard waste, which increases the number of vehicle trips. He described how organics programs are organized and collected.

Board Member Anderson stated some residents don't want to have a third container.

City Planner Anderson stated at a recent joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting, the issue of organics was raised and there seemed to be general consensus for staff to work with the Board on how organics could be approached. Options include a curbside program and/or opportunities for a small scale collection point, such as at a park.

Board Member Hiatt asked whether the waste hauling industry is set up to handle organics.

City Planner Anderson stated that not all haulers are but the industry is evolving and he thinks for the City to meet State set goals, Ramsey will eventually need to have an organics program as it is recyclable and a large component of the waste stream.

Chairperson Stodola asked why organics can't be disposed of with yard waste.

City Planner Anderson stated he does not necessarily know but it may have to do with the proper mixing and ratios of browns and greens to create compost.

Board Member Anderson asked if the topic of organics can be introduced through the City's newsletter to provide pre-education.

Board Member Hiatt stated he talked with his neighbors who indicated they want to keep down the level of truck traffic on their street. Another issue is to provide quality service, which he thinks is being provided by Ace Solid Waste. He felt organics may be a long-term goal rather than a short-term goal.

City Planner Anderson reviewed the past contract terms and recommended not going beyond a five-year term as this industry is evolving. He stated the Board also asked him how Ramsey's contract rates compared with other communities, which is included in the case report. He explained why this contract has proven to be beneficial over its term.

Chairperson Stodola asked if other cities are offering organics collection.

City Planner Anderson described Elk River's organics program.

Board Member Hiatt agreed a step in that direction is needed and suggested building the development of an organics program (education, pilot project) into an RFP.

City Planner Anderson stated there is time to develop program specifics such as education.

Board Member Anderson stated it would be interesting and helpful to get feedback from those already in an organics program relating to perceived benefit.

City Planner Anderson stated that type of information would identify whether there are issues that need to be addressed to make the program more successful and give an idea on the level of participation.

City Planner Anderson asked if there had been general Board consensus that a contracted service was supported over open hauling. The Environmental Policy Board confirmed that was its consensus.

City Planner Anderson stated then the next step would be to consider a recommendation as to whether the City should attempt to directly negotiate with its current hauler for a new contract or develop an RFP for competitive bids.

Chairperson Stodola stated Ace Solid Waste has done a good job so he would suggest staff start negotiations with them including whether they would offer a residential organics program.

Board Member Hiatt supported accepting the goals drafted by City Planner Anderson, using them as a guideline, and to authorize staff to start negotiation with the present provider as they have done a good job.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Bernard to accept the goals as drafted by City Planner Anderson and detailed in the case report.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Members Hiatt, Bernard, Anderson, and Trossen. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Members Covart and Valentine.

Board Member Trossen also supported negotiating with Ace Solid Waste as they have been a good service provider.

Motion by Chairperson Stodola and seconded by Board Member Trossen to recommend the City Council direct staff to negotiate a recycling contracted service with the current hauler.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Members Trossen, Anderson, Bernard, and Hiatt. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Members Covart and Valentine.