

5.02: Consider 2019 Municipal Recycling Funding Request

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that each year, Anoka County receives funding from the State of Minnesota pursuant to Minnesota Statute 115A.557. The County distributes these funds, known as SCORE (Select Committee On Recycling and the Environment) funds, to municipalities within the county. In 2019, the allocation includes a base of \$10,000 plus \$5.00 per household, which would place Ramsey with a base allocation of \$55,390 for 2019. He explained that the funding is intended to help municipalities achieve their recycling goals as established by the Anoka County Board of Commissioners. Ramsey's 2019 recycling goal, established by Anoka County, is 2,777 tons (which is an increase of 81 tons from 2018). The goal is based on 215 pounds per person. The City of Ramsey has traditionally used these funds to promote recycling and waste reduction education and awareness, notifying new residents of the recycling program components, to offset costs of the spring and fall recycling day events and other collection events/opportunities, and to fund the recycling coordinator position, whose duties are a component of the City Planner position.

City Planner Anderson provided background information on the recent changes in the recycling market.

City Planner Anderson stated that in addition to the base allocation, there are four broad funding categories where additional funds can be requested: drop-off, general enhancement, organics, and an open-grant option for general program expansion. Staff is proposing to request an additional \$2,700 for the Summer Recycling Event (drop-off), \$12,800 for general enhancement (covers parks recycling, event promotion, etc.), and \$1,600 for the organics program. While there is the potential for up to \$20,000 for the open-grant option, it is clearly not intended to be long-term funding and therefore staff has not included that in the current request.

Chairperson Valentine stated that the future of plastics recycling is in doubt and asked if that may bring back interest in incineration rather than landfills.

City Planner Anderson stated that the GRE facility in Elk River is closing sometime in 2019, as it was losing funds in the operation. He was unsure that incineration would be a long-term option. He stated clarified that he does not think plastics recycling is going away, but simply needs to be refocused with better education on what is recyclable. He stated that there are markets for the plastics if the contaminates can be taken out on the user end.

Board Member Fetterley asked if increased education of the public will allow the City to continue to meet the recycling tonnage goals or whether residents would be less likely to recycle in fear for doing it wrong.

City Planner Anderson replied that Ramsey residents do a great job recycling. He stated that in speaking with ACE Solid Waste, the large amount of contaminates are not coming from the Ramsey routes. He acknowledged that it is a fine line as you do not want to discourage people from recycling but simply emphasize recycling the correct materials rather than "wish-cycling". He explained that the mindset for years has been that if you think something can be recycled, put in the recycling whereas the new moto is "when in doubt, throw it out".

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that it is clear that recycling is becoming more complicated because of the changing markets, which is changing the way people look at recycling. He believed that it is important for the EPB to make a statement on recycling.

Chairperson Valentine agreed that it is important to be clear on the stance of the EPB to continue to support recycling and seek additional funding in order to continue to be successful. He stated that this is a key juncture in the recycling world.

Commissioner Fetterley agreed that it is important to continue to focus on this topic. She thanked staff for bringing this request forward for the City to request additional funds to continue the recycling efforts effectively.

City Planner Anderson stated that recycling is still extremely important and beneficial, there are just changes occurring right now. He stated that there are benefits to having a successful recycling program, which Ramsey has had for many years. He stated that it will become more challenging in the future to meet the increasing goals in the changing market. He noted that a portion of the additional funds being requested will be to facilitate the summer recycling event, which continues to increase in participation. He stated that there will just be an emphasis on providing clear educational messaging to the participants in the program on what is recyclable.

Jade Moore, 8277 155th Lane, referenced a statement made by City Planner Anderson regarding a barrier of language and asked for additional clarification.

City Planner Anderson replied that the barrier is that English is the second language of some residents of multi-family apartments and therefore the educational material may be more difficult to understand. He stated that the use of pictures is being contemplated to make it easier to understand. He stated that the City does have access to documents in different languages through Anoka County. He stated that Ramsey does not have the same ratio of multi-family apartment housing that other communities in Anoka County may have. He stated that he is not aware of the language barrier being a large problem in Ramsey but is aware that the documents are available because of the need in other communities.

Motion by Chairperson Valentine and seconded by Board Member Covart to recommend that the City Council authorize staff to submit the 2019 Recycling Funding Request to Anoka County.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Valentine, Board Member Covart, Bernard, Fetterley, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Hiatt and Madison.