



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
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STREET MAINTENANCE
TRAFFIC ENGINEERING
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT
REFUSE/ RECYCLING
CENTRAL STORES
STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

TO: Eric D. Campbell, City Manager
FROM: Thomas Hartman, PE, LEED AP, Director of Public Works
DATE: April 9, 2019
RE: Solid Waste and Recycling Update Report

Summary: The Department of Public Works will provide an update on the operations of the Solid Waste and Recycling Program. The update will include past and current operations, partnerships, challenges, and opportunities moving forward with the program

Background: Prior to July 2014 the City operated the solid waste program in 2 distinct areas. The collected municipal solid waste (MSW) was taken to the Resource Recovery Facility (RRF) and was incinerated to create steam for use by JMU. Recycling was collected comingled at the curb side and taken to a city operated material recovery facility (MRF), where the recyclables were sorted and marketed by the City to recycling vendors. The average annual recycling rate for the City during this period was just over 25%.

In July 2014 the City made the decision to cease operations at the RRF due to the volume of waste being delivered to the facility dropping and the decrease in the cost of natural gas. Following the ceasing of operations, the City disposed of the MSW at the Rockingham County landfill, however, the MRF was still in operation and recyclables were collected at the curb side. The average annual recycling rate for the City during this transitional period was just over 25%.

In August of 2015 the City procured a contract with Van Der Lynde Recycling (VDL) in Troy Virginia. VDL was a MRF that processed both comingled recyclables as well as MSW, and because of their operations the City was able to stop the traditional curb side recycling program. At this time the City introduced its 'All in One' program, in which residents were instructed to combine their MSW and recyclables and place out on their scheduled collection day. This material was transferred at a City facility and hauled to VDL for processing. This process increased the City's annual average recycling rate to around 50%.

In January of 2018 a significant policy change occurred where China instituted the "National Sword" policy which both restricted the acceptance of many recyclable material, as well as drastically decreasing the acceptable contamination rate of the recyclable goods from 10% to 0.5%. This policy had a significant impact on the global recycling economy as many nations had become accustomed to China accepting nearly all recyclables and with a rather large contamination factor. Following this change many marketable opportunities for MRF facilities went away due to either the increased cost of sorting the material to the higher standard, or that material was simply not marketable any more.

Due to this policy, in February of 2018, the City was notified by VDL that it had been sold and that the new owner would not be continuing the MRF operations at the scale previously used by VDL. Due to this change the City stopped hauling its waste to VDL and began to dispose of the City's combined waste and recyclable material at the Rockingham County landfill for the time being. Also, due to this change the City had no means of recycling as the previously utilized City MRF had been removed from operation. In April of 2018 the City opened a Recycling Convenience Center (RCC), which would allow Citizens to bring their recyclables to the RCC and self-sort the material into specific bins. The RCC accepts #1, #2, #3-#7 plastics, tin, aluminum, cardboard, and paper.

The Public Works Department has been operating the RCC for approximately one year and has collected 512 tons of recyclable material. In September of 2018 Public Works began providing a mobile recycling unit at the Tuesday and Saturday Farmers Market. This has been very well received, with most every Saturday filling the containers within the first hour and a half. In addition to recyclable material being brought and disposed of at the RCC we have seen an increase in citizens bringing their bulk and yard debris items directly to the RCC as well.

With the recycling program we are currently utilizing, the City has been able to establish local partnerships with recycling vendors for the disposal of the collected materials. We work with Dave's Recycling, Valley Paper, and Recycle Management, and because of these local vendors the City is able to dispose of this material at little to no cost. In addition to the City being able to provide a local business with clean recyclable materials for the operations. We also partner with Gift and Thrift for the ability to have our citizens place gently used items in the supplied donation box instead of placing those items in the waste stream.

Even with the revised Solid Waste and Recycling program there are still many challenges and uncertainties that we are facing not only as a City, but as a State and Nation. The main challenge is the continued impact of the China National Sword policy and the continuing ripple effects our vendors are experiencing. As a result, on April 1st of this year the City stopped accepting #3-#7 plastics at our RCC and mobile unit, due to the vendor, Sonoco Recycling, no longer accepting these materials. The Public Works Department worked with Rockingham County and James Madison University in searching for a vendor that would accept this material, however all of the vendors we spoke with were stopping their acceptance of #3-#7 plastics similar to Sonoco.

Finally, Public Works is currently in the process of procuring an improved mobile recycling unit and with this new unit we will be able to stage it in different areas of the City throughout the week. The locations would be City owned parks or facilities, and the schedule will follow the current quadrant-based collection schedule. For example, when we are collecting solid waste in the northeast quadrant of the City, we would stage the mobile unit at the Lucy Simms Center. We feel that by offering a more community centered location for disposal of recycling we will give citizens more opportunity to recycle.

Key Issues: Solid Waste and Recycling.

The City With The Planned Future

Environmental Impact: Various.

Fiscal Impact: Minimal cost impacts as we are currently operating this program within currently approved budgets.

Prior Actions: None.

Alternatives: None.

Community Engagement: None.

Recommendation: None.

Attachments: Mobile Unit Deployment Map, and Council Presentation.

Review:

The initiating Department Director will place in Legistar, in sequence of transmittal, the names of each department that must initial their review in order for this item to be placed on the City Council agenda. The completion of review only addresses the readiness of the issue for Council consideration. This does not address the recommendation for approval or denial of the issue.

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