
MEMORANDUM

TO: LAWRENCE CITY COMMISSION
FROM: ARON CROMWELL
SUBJECT: CITY CURBSIDE RECYCLING
DATE: JANUARY 18, 2013
CC: DAVE CORLISS

As the issues, options and costs surrounding curbside recycling are somewhat complex I thought it may be helpful to provide this analysis and my current recommendation ahead of the city commission forum. In general it has been determined that increasing our city's recycling rate is a value that is supported by a majority of Lawrencians. The solid waste task force reiterated a goal that the city's recycling rate be 50%. We can not expect to increase our recycling rate without changing what we are doing now. Currently we have an amalgamation of small haulers, self haulers, and Deffenbaugh customers who do a great job of recycling; the problem is we also have a large number of households who don't regularly recycle. The fact of the matter is that recycling has to be very simple and very inexpensive to get majority buy-in, even in a community that espouses environmental values like Lawrence. Other communities have identified that the best way of increasing recycling is to place a recycling bin next to a trash bin at every household. That was recommended by the solid waste task force provided the cost was reasonable.

The results of the RFP are a bit difficult to interpret as no two proposals were the same; however, it was clear that single stream curbside recycling could be added to the suite of services that the city provides for a very modest increase to our rate payers. I am most interested in the bi-weekly schedule as it offers curbside recycling at a very low cost which respects the concerns of many who wrote to me while I chaired the Solid Waste Task Force.

In each proposal the city would receive a portion of the value of the recycled material collected, like a rebate. This rebate would vary as the value of the various materials (paper, plastic, and metals) varies; these materials are commodities. In each proposal this is treated somewhat differently but the Waste Management proposal is only competitive if the commodity value remains high. In their proposal the city takes additional risk.

The Hamm proposal is the most desirable from the standpoint of local jobs and the environmental cost of transporting our recyclables would be lowest as their facility would be nearby. Unfortunately we estimate a recycling tonnage of roughly half what the Hamm facility says they need to break even. Their proposal is dependent upon Lawrence producing much more recycling than we think we can right now. As a recycling facility (MRF) exists in Topeka and Kansas City the Hamm facility would have to count on Lawrence's tonnage to exist.

As it stands now the two best options are the City collecting and Deffenbaugh processing or Deffenbaugh collecting and processing our recycling. These options were both about the same cost so my current recommendation is to have the City collect and Deffenbaugh process. With the City doing the collection we have greater control over the program and can choose to switch our processors later if we can find a better market for our recyclables. We may even find that in the future we can offer Hamm the volume they would need to run a MRF processing center.

In addition to the rebate for the value of the recyclables, the city would save money in the tipping fee it would avoid paying at the landfill as trash is diverted, and by moving to a four day a week collection schedule for both trash and recycling. When these savings are taken into account the net increase needed for our ratepayers is only about \$2 a month. An amazing bargain for a great service in Lawrence. I look forward to our discussions on Tuesday night.