



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:20-6047

Agenda Item Number: 3

Agenda Date: 10/22/2020

In Control: Community Health and Equity Committee

DEPARTMENT: Solid Waste Management Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: David Newman

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Recycling Update

SUMMARY:

A briefing on the current state of recycling and how it will affect future recycling contracts, as well as current recycling goals and potential program changes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In 2010, the City Council adopted the Recycling and Resource Recovery Plan (the Plan) proposed by the Solid Waste Management Department (SWMD). The Plan consisted of three goals to increase recycling and make recycling more accessible to all residents.

The goals of the Plan are:

1. Ensure all single-family and multi-family residents have access to convenient recycling;
2. Improve recycling opportunities for businesses; and
3. Recycle 60% of the single-family residential waste stream by 2025.

Goal 1 was achieved in 2010 by City Council adopting the Multi-Family Recycling Ordinance, requiring all multi-family residences to offer equal and accessible recycling for residents. Goal 2 was achieved with the launch of the ReWorksSA program in February 2018. ReWorksSA certifies businesses for their recycling and sustainability activities and provides tools to assist businesses in starting recycling programs.

Goal 3 is ongoing, with a current residential recycling rate of 36%. The Plan included four primary strategies to improve residential recycling rates: expanding education and outreach opportunities, revamping curbside

brush & bulky collections, implementing an organics recycling program, and adopting a variable rate pricing (pay as you throw) structure. For the last two years, the recycling rate has stalled at about 36%. Several factors affect the recycling market, including changes to the recycling industry and changes to commodities and commodity sales.

The SWMD currently has a contract for recycling processing with Republic Services (formerly ReCommunity). This contract is favorable to SWMD and is scheduled to end in 2024. Moving forward, it is expected that processing costs will climb as processors attempt to minimize market risk. Processors are now expecting commodities to be clean and of higher quality than in the past. Because of this new focus on quality, the SWMD would like to consider removing plastic bags and film, and Styrofoam™ (expanded polystyrene foam), from the recycling program. Removing these items from the program would require a change to the City Code, Chapter 14 - Solid Waste, 14-12.

The SWMD is currently working with a consultant to evaluate all options for moving forward with the recycling processing contract. Future options include extending the contract with the current vendor, completing an RFP for a new contractor, and/or SWMD building a City-owned and potentially City-operated materials recovery facility (MRF).

ISSUE:

The SWMD would like the opportunity to brief the Community Health and Equity Committee on the current state of recycling and seek guidance on moving forward with changes to the current recycling program. Additionally, the SWMD would like to come back to the Committee in Spring 2021, after completing the evaluation of options for moving forward with a recycling processing contract.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only, and there is no fiscal impact at this time.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only.