



Utility Advisory Committee

Waste ReSources 2021 Recycling Program Changes: Next Steps

Agenda Date: 2/4/2021
Agenda Item Number:
File Number:21-0133

Type: information **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

Title

Waste ReSources 2021 Recycling Program Changes: Next Steps

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Receive a progress update on the City's Recycling Program

Report

Issue:

Briefing on Waste Resources Recycling Program regarding recycling markets and a progress report on changes to the City's acceptable recycling list

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Background and Analysis:

Briefing on Recycling

Staff last presented to UAC about recycling on December 5, 2019. Staff provided an update to the committee about the changes to the City's acceptable recycle materials list, which included the City's community outreach plan to inform customers. The changes included shifting glass collection to drop-off sites rather than having it mixed with all the other recyclables, and removal of poly-coated cartons (milk, juice, soy and soup) from the recycle acceptance list. Staff also briefed UAC on the global recycling markets at the December meeting. The recycle acceptance list changes went into effect on January 1, 2020.

At the February 2020 meeting, staff gave an update during announcements about status of the recycle changes. At that time, staff had received 94 phone calls and 77 emails regarding the changes to recycling.

The recycle changes the City made came at the request of both the City's recycle processor, Pioneer Recycling Services, and LeMay/Waste Connections which is the company that transports recycle material from Thurston County to Pioneer in Frederickson, Washington. The requests came about as a result of China and other nations banning recycle imports, which caused an excess of recycle material in the marketplace. Supply was, and still is far exceeding demand. As a result, recycle buyers are much more selective about the material they will accept. Glass embedded into paper fibers has been an issue with commingled recycling for well over a decade. The vast majority of domestic paper mills will not buy paper from a recycle processor that accepts glass in the mix. Changing the City's acceptance list helps make the rest of our material, more desirable and achieves regional alignment with Thurston County.

Overall, customers adapted to the change quicker than staff had anticipated, and by March, the amount of glass in the residential curbside program had lowered to around 7 percent from 22 percent. Staff continues to work with collectors and customers to further reduce the amount of glass in the commingled cart.

At the February 2021 meeting, staff will provide an update on recycling markets, the City's acceptable items list and how source separated glass collection at drop-off sites is working.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Olympia residential recycling customers have an interest in how the impacts to recycling, can impact customer rates and the City's recycle acceptance list.

Options:

Receive briefing on Olympia's recycling program.

Financial Impact:

Recycling commodity revenues, and decisions the City makes regarding certain materials, impact the Waste ReSources budget, ultimately affecting customer utility rates for garbage and recycling. Recycle revenue continues to factor into utility budgeting and rate setting.

Attachments:

None.