

Environmental & Franchise Utilities Committee Meeting Minutes, 1/24/12

Present: Michael Halley, Susan Silvers, Martha Rasmussen, Jeff Clawson, Dianne Palmer, Lacey Jacobs

Points of discussion

Business owner Dianne Palmer expressed that she feels the city's \$3/month fee for use of the Connelly recycling center is an unfair and unwanted burden to local businesses. She took the time to talk to other business owners and said that no one she spoke with takes their recycling to Connelly's, instead they opt to pay directly for recycling pick-up. Halley had spoken with Palmer at length about this issue prior to the committee meeting and explained that the service for keeping the Connelly center open to the public six days a week must be paid for by those who use the service (not from the city's General Fund as it partially was in the past). Clawson explained that because the businesses weren't paying anything for this service in the past the burden fell 100% on to residential city services users (residential users are still paying 2/3 of the cost to keep the Connelly center open to the public). Silvers was one of the council representatives who worked with the county on the contract for the recycling center and said that the percentage paid by the city and county is based on population. That contract is locked in for approximately another 2 ½ years. Even though the committee understands Palmer's concerns the fee will stay as it is until a new arrangement can be worked out regarding the recycling center. Halley will research the possibility of the city negotiating a less expensive curbside recycling service for businesses.

In the city's ongoing efforts to balance its various funds, the residential rates for recycling and garbage pickup were reviewed. Clawson explained that for years the costs the city incurred for these services was higher than the rates charged to the users. This created a \$130,000 deficit in the Garbage Fund. Current fees for residential and trash services barely cover the city's costs, so in order to pay down this deficit a 6% increase was proposed. This comes to a \$.95/month increase for residential trash and recycling pickup services. After discussing the importance of balancing this budget the committee unanimously decided to propose the \$.95/month rate increase to the full council.

Clawson reminded the council that a complete re-haul of the city code will begin this year. Each committee will be responsible for a portion of the code, which means long, tedious meetings are on the horizon. The entire process will likely take two years to complete.

Waste Management sent the city information on solar trash compactors. The committee liked the idea of trying one but isn't willing to spend funds from the budget at this time.

Committee planning for 2012 included: exploring commercial recycling service; a trial of curbside leaf pickup using the vacuum truck (no bags necessary); and the Alliant Energy Hometown Rewards Program.

Recommendations/Actions

- Committee asked administrator Clawson to write up an ordinance to change the residential and commercial recycling and trash rates to be voted on at the next council meeting.