

Environmental & Franchise Utilities Committee Meeting Minutes, 1/3/13, City Hall Council Chambers

Present: Michael Halley, Martha Rasmussen, Kevin Flanagan, Darrel Bisgard, Scott Timm, Tracy Vance, Jan Swinton, Fred McElwee, Ron Blair, Scott Armendt, John Myer, Stacey Munson

Points of discussion

Halley thanked those in attendance for coming and gave a brief review of the new city compost project. In the past FF citizens were able to bring their yard debris to the Wastewater grounds where they would decompose along with the bagged leaves collected by Waste Management. With so much construction at the WW plant this option is no longer available, so Halley, Flanagan, Bisgard, Vance, Swinton, and Timm have been working over the past weeks to develop a new community compost program. FEDA has agreed to lease the city a plot of land at the intersection of 20th and W Jackson, though the details of the lease agreement have yet to be worked out: their main stipulation is that the land maintains its value and that no foul odors affect neighbors. The group visited the Lee County waste authority to learn about their composting program. They use a contractor who comes to grind their material as needed, including wooden pallets, at an affordable rate. FF's program could use a service like this instead of purchasing our own equipment, so when the time comes the city will open this service for competitive bidding.

The group then discussed the pros/cons of various types of composting. Scott Armendt from Chamness Technologies, a regional professional composting company, warned against accepting food waste unless a system is in place to minimize odor. Chamness produces a compost product and is therefore subject to much stricter DNR regulations than FF would be, though the basic process for producing a useable compost product would be much the same. John Meyer, president of French Reneker and former public works director of Waterloo, Iowa advised the city to ensure that the program is well designed with deterrents to trash dumping. Fairfield's facility will be gated, and it has yet to be determined what days/hours it will be open to the public. Armendt also mentioned that it's not uncommon for non-degradable debris (e.g. plastic bags) to get mixed in with the organic material and contaminate the finished compost, making it less useable, so precautions will be taken to avoid this.

Local Food coordinator Jan Swinton would like to see the program grow to include food waste from local institutions. Fred McElwee from the FF schools expressed potential interest in including school food waste in the program, including both kitchen and cafeteria waste. Stacey Munson, dietary director at the Jefferson County Heath Center, is currently looking at ways to compost their food wastes, possibly on site, though she is also interested in learning more about FF's program. The city of Dubuque offers a voluntary curbside residential compost pick-up program that may be something FF could work out with Waste Management, though this would be well after the initial program is in place.

Ron Blair represented Creative Edge, who currently throws out large numbers of wooden pallets, is interested in the possibility of grinding and composting the pallets instead of them going in the SEMCO landfill. The grinding contractor can potentially include pallets, though the costs to do so would likely need to be covered by the businesses supplying the pallets.

It was agreed that the initial program will include yard debris only - branches, leaves, and grass clippings - with a "trail pile" including a small amount of food waste at some point. The current mulch piles on Jefferson and behind O'Reilly's will be consolidated at the new location, and added to WM's leaf bags. The city will apply for grants, such as the Solid Waste Alternatives Program (SWAP), to help cover the set-up costs with the goal of having everything in place in time for the spring brush pickup.

Recommendations/Actions

No official committee action taken at this time.