



Staff Report

July 11, 2006

TO: City Council

FROM: Bob Weir, Public Works Director
Sue Gedestad, Operations Administrator

SUBJECT: Green Waste Pick-Up

Recommendation

Support the process outlined below to bring sufficient information to Commissions and Council to make a determination on whether or not to alter the manner in which yard refuse or green waste is collected in the City of Davis.

Fiscal Impact

No direct impact. Ultimately the decision made could result in a range of possible costs from zero to significant increases to residential garbage rates.

Background

The review of the City's green waste disposal method has come forward for several reasons; bicycle safety, aesthetics and storm water management. More information is provided below.

Bicycle Safety

The current collection method of collecting green waste loose in the street poses safety concerns for bicycle riders. The conflict between piles of green waste and bicyclists has been recognized over the years and appears in the City of Davis Bicycle Plan as an issue needing improvement. The specific goal and objective written in the bike plan is:

GOAL: Yard Debris in Bike Lane

Objective:

1. When yard and garden waste is piled by the edge of the road and begins to block the bike lane, it becomes a significant safety hazard. The hazard is that a cyclist may actually collide with a pile of debris, but even worse, cyclists may suddenly veer out of the bike lane into the motor vehicle travel lane at the last minute and cause a collision. The City needs to reconsider the way in which yard debris is picked up, or at the minimum, make a concerted effort to better educate residents as to proper procedures for putting the waste out for collection.

The Sacramento Area Bicycle Association (SABA) has also asked that the Bicycle Advisory Commission (BAC) and City Council review collection alternatives primarily in light of cyclist safety but also raised other concerns. The BAC commission has indicated their support for containerization, however have not made an official recommendation. Attached is the letter from SABA indicating their position and request.

Aesthetics

Over the last several years, but especially after converting to automated trash and recycling pick up, some residents have voiced their preference for containerized pick up for green waste. The concern is the aesthetics of having green waste loose in the street and on windy days the blowing material.

Storm Water Management

The Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) staff, in review of the City's Storm Water Management Plan submitted March 2003, has found the current green waste management program to be inadequate. RWQCB staff contends that loose green waste in the street degrades storm water quality and emphasizes that green waste containerization or its equivalent is needed. City staff has responded to the RWQCB staff outlining the multiple facets of the current green waste management program and expressing that our observations lend to considering the program equivalent to if not exceeding that of containerization. In addition, City staff is questioning the lack of scientific analysis performed by RWQCB staff in asserting that containerization is more protective of water quality.

A survey the City of Woodland conducted (attached) does seem to indicate that Davis is about the only agency that picks up green waste loose in the street. There are communities that have a hybrid method that either offers both options or has containerization most of the year but allows street pick up during heavy leaf season, October thru January.

Solid Waste

The State of California requires that communities divert 50% of its waste from the landfill. Currently green waste is approximately 52% of the City's total diversion. The concern is that more green waste will end up being disposed in trash and/or recycling carts which will then end up in the land fill.

Also, a current unknown is how the citizenry feels about the issue and if there is widespread interest in changing the disposal method. When the City of Woodland went to their city council with the recommendation to fully convert to containerization, the out cry was significant. The City then established a citizen committee to review and come up with recommendations. The current status is that the committee has recommended a hybrid method allowing to some degree both street pick up and carts. The Woodland City Council has asked staff to work with the franchise hauler to determine the cost of implementation.

The City of Davis also experienced a moderate amount of resistance with the conversion to automated pick up for trash and recycling two years ago. Concerns mostly surrounded the lack of space needed to store two carts. This conversion would require a minimum of one additional cart.

Attached is a matrix that begins to compare and assess various pick up options. The elements that have been discussed in this report are reviewed and commented on by pick up method. At this point, two options have surfaced as potential options to the current disposal method. They are both a hybrid that allows for some street pick up during certain times of the year. The costs associated with those two methods are very preliminary but are a good indication of magnitude and comparison.

In June, staff presented to the BAC and the NRC this report with the same request of supporting the process outlined below. Both commissions concurred with the outlined process. The NRC asked that staff also consider the effect of green waste pick up specifically in the downtown area.

Staff is recommending the following process:

1. Continue to work with the SRWQCB in developing the best strategy for green waste disposal. In the City's May response to the RWQCB letter, staff asked that the RWQCB provide any information or evidence supporting the use containers as a measure necessary to achieve the Maximum Extent Practicable (MEP) standard. Additionally the City requested specific information regarding the scope and level of green waste containerization that the RWQCB believes is necessary to achieve the MEP standard in the City of Davis. Fundamental to assessing the various disposal methods is to understand the environmental effects each method has and then weigh that information with all other pertinent factors. A meeting is scheduled with the RWQCB for July 19, 2006 to continue discussions on this matter.
2. Continue to monitor the City of Woodland's process. Staff is interested in the final outcome to see what the RWQCB will accept. The City of Woodland's citizen committee has recommended a hybrid system that containerizes grass clippings but allows loose green waste in the street once a month and then every week during leaf drop season. We are interested in better understanding the RWQCB view of hybrids. For example what kinds are acceptable or what elements of a hybrid need to be present for it to be acceptable. Also, are hybrids considered a long term solution or are they considered a stepping stone to full containerization.
3. Conduct a citizen survey to gather information on what residents are interested in as it relates to green waste disposal. This survey would guide staff in working with the RWQCB and in developing alternatives as appropriate.

Attachments

SABA letter
City Response
April 12, 2006 letter form RWQCB
May 11, 2006 City Response
Alternatives Matrix