

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SOLID WASTE ACTIVITIES

October 26, 2004

6:00 PM

Chairman Forest called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Forest, Roy, Guinta, Thibault

Messrs: F. Thomas, K. Rhodes

Chairman Forest addressed Item 3 of the agenda:

Chairman Forest advises that the purpose of the meeting shall be a presentation of a report by the Public Works Director's Solid Waste Focus Group.

Frank Thomas, Public Works Director, stated the reason why we're here tonight is that back approximately six months ago there was some discussion whether we should enter into an extension of the Waste Management contracts for recycling and yard waste services. At that time we were authorized to proceed for another year but to investigate the feasibility of moving forward with Waste Management again. As part of that discussion, internally we decided that there was probably more of a need to look at Manchester's entire solid waste program. It's hard to believe but the landfill has been closed approximately nine years now, we've had approximately nine years of contracted services with Waste Management for transfer and disposal of solid waste, recycling, and yard waste. We are now coming to a juncture where we have to make a decision whether we want to extend the yard waste and recycling contract with Waste Management for another year or go out for a RFP to seek a new vendor of those services. In addition, a lot has taken place over the nine or ten years. You see toters out on the streets now, we have an informal toter program in the downtown area, we see recycling, not achieving the goals that we wanted to see, and so we decided to form a focus group and Ken Rhodes from CLD we engaged the services of that firm more or less to act as a mediator for this focus group. I'll steel a little of Ken's thunder but the focus group was made up of a combination of Highway Department staff, Aldermen, yourself and some of the other committee members, and representatives from the Mayor's office and CLD, Ken Rhodes as the moderator.

What we did is we went through the whole program. What we're doing, what's good, what's bad, where we should be heading and we will start the power point presentation. Again, the reason why we're here tonight is to present to the committee a summary of what developed from this focus group, what our recommendations are to this committee, and hopefully the committee will concur with that and forward these recommendations onto the full Board of Mayor and Aldermen. What we want to do in the very short term, what we want to do in the little longer term regarding recycling and yard waste contracts, and quite frankly where we want to be five years from now. So this is basically developing a road map of our solid waste program which will be presented hopefully to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. In the interim you have a handout and if you turn to the second page. The second page basically notes this focus group that we go together. I was on it as Public Works Director, Kevin Sheppard, Deputy Director, Bob Neveu, solid waste superintendent, he was on board, JoAnne McLaughlin, recycling superintendent, Armand Forest, Chairman of Solid Waste Committee, Alderman Roy, and then we had representatives from the Mayor's office, Mike Colby, and Ken Rhodes of CLD. That made up the focus group. The focus group met on two occasions for the better part of a morning and then we've had numerous meetings at the staff level summarizing what was developed from these meetings. We will now go through the presentation with Ken Rhodes from the firm of CLD and we'll try to answer any questions that you may have.

Ken Rhodes, CLD, stated as you can see from solid waste focus group and I've been pleased to be working with Frank and the department for a number of years on all of the solid waste issues in town. The group that you folks participated in included Director and Deputy Director, your working folks, the folks who are nuts and bolting this on a daily basis, Alderman representatives, Mike and myself. We went through two sessions and in summary, and we did issue a report here, some of the current observations to set where we feel could be a series of immediate implementation recommendations, short-term recommendations, and long term recommendations. There was a very strong consensus that overall the City of Manchester residents are getting a really great value for the dollars that are spent on their solid waste program. It's a very comprehensive program and it has evolved through and since the closing of the landfill to still address the entire spectrum of solid waste services. One of the things that also came as an observation is it is getting to a point where it is going to continue to be difficult to maintain all of these levels of services with the resources available and be all things to all your constituents. So the last point before we would move onto some of these recommendations is there are two things that we can not avoid in solid waste work as we go forward into not even the short term but longer term future. Disposal options are going to become more expensive. The resources are going to become more limited, therefore, they are going to become more expensive, and therefore, overall the role of any municipality or any solid waste organization

should be to try as best possible to move towards limiting how much you eventually have to dispose of. And, as we've seen through the last quarter of the 20th century and onward, innovation will probably, if not most definitely, improve reuse opportunities. With those things in mind, we went forward and why are some of the reasons we got to this particular point. You folks have contract renewals coming up with Waste Management at this time. Your recycling contract is in its last year option, your yard waste contract is in its last year option, for solid waste you are in the first of your five-year option to move forward. He gave us, as the Director said, the point to evaluate where we've been over the past nine years and some of the lessons that we've learned. In our discussion we were able to focus on bringing our questions down to three areas. We're starting to use the word very clearly from the City's point of view as anybody else would that your solid waste program has customers. You needed to find exactly who those customers are; we're going to define the service we're going to provide to those customers. Municipal solid waste recycling, yard waste, bulky waste to these customers and define who will provide these services to the customer. Will it be the public entity, will it be a private entity, how will these things continue to move forward. Out of the series discussions, and again, when we would look for your department's feedback but also recommendations to move forward to the full board, we came to three points of implementation immediately. We recommend that the City should continue the residential municipal solid waste curbside collection program with transportation disposal by Waste Management. You folks have an excellent contract with Waste Management at this point that defines costs for a period of time; you have a disposal option that is protected for a good term in the future. Twenty years plus.

Mr. Thomas interjected I'd like to just jump in for a minute and I think this is a very important point to focus in on. As Ken mentioned, disposal sites throughout the state are becoming less and less. We do have the option with the present contract that we have with Waste Management for transportation and disposal of our solid waste in a secure state of the art landfill up at Rochester. The beauty of this proposal is, as I mentioned, it is a start of the art landfill, we do have a long-term ability to continue to renew that contract for five-year options and quite frankly the unit price that we have for disposal is excellent. You marry the transfer and disposal that Waste Management is providing with the service that the Highway Department is providing with curbside collection, and I think you have a high level of service at a very reasonable price. So I think it is important that we continue with that aspect.

Mr. Rhodes stated and again to reinforce, that is a very, very solid and core part of your program. Recommendation to immediately exercise the last one year option for recycling and yard waste with Waste Management. Going into this last year, again as we discussed at committee, there were a number of concerns in this particular area. In this past year I even asked JoAnne McLaughlin each day with some more attention to that how has it gone so far. There has been a better experience each year. That does not mean to say that the committee did not appreciate what the board heard last year. These two areas, particularly in the yard waste marrying recycling with it, are something that we need to work together and study how carefully to move forward because these are some of the more difficult areas to get people to respond effectively with cost effective measures. With that we would develop a RFP's for recycling and yard waste taking into the account the lessons that we've learned; we may modify the service, we may modify the terms of those services a little bit, again based on what we've learned. Two other things for immediate implementation. The drop off center on Dunbarton Road, we would recommend augmenting the hours on the first and third Saturdays of the month to stretch those hours out a little bit more, make it more convenient for residents to two times a month and continue to expand toter use for the small commercial businesses and non-profit organizations. It seems that a benchmark that we would like to recommend and to continue to use in the program were two toters that gets to be about where somebody ought to start thinking about, I want to start talking about a short-term implementation moving onto the private sector. So those five recommendations in summary, continue the program you have with Waste Management, exercise your option, use this intervening timeframe for this option, develop a effective RFP, move forward on the recycling and yard waste, augment the drop off, expand the toter use.

Mr. Rhodes continued in the short term there are seven recommendations to move forward. The first one we think is something that will be really helpful in working with the boards and for the department. We want to develop a customer database. We have selected a series of customers, single residents, up to multi-families, small commercial and in conjunction with the Building Department and however we can do this with addresses, literally develop a database that says these are the customers that will be serviced by this program and addresses obviously ones being the large commercials are not customers of the program, therefore, you always have a benchmark and a database to move forward. Move toward mandatory use of toters in the downtown toter collection zone, implement and really get after cardboard recycling the downtown, that would help with your volume tremendously, you want to restrict bulky waste collection. Right now if you put it out on the curb, however many couches, lazy boys and otherwise, the department comes and picks them up is a tremendous service. We've got to start getting our arms around what customers of the program have available to them. We're recommending that there is two free pick ups per property per year to

implement on a short-term basis, after that there will be a fee schedule for additional pick ups. The department would like to talk to the board about creating an enforcement position utilizing the fees from the modified bulky program and solid waste user fees. Somebody to look after these kinds of things that again this last year have resulted in some improvements of the program. Include free resident yard waste disposal at the drop off area. You want to include that in the RFP and move forward to a weekly single resident recycling program with collections on the same day as MSW. I think one of the most powerful lessons learned is that this is a practical matter. Is it trash day, is it recycling day, are you in or are you out and I think it's becoming more obvious that the City should move towards getting everything out at the same time. The other thing that seems to be the trend of the industry, people are going to single stream recycling; you put it all in one place, you let somebody else create the product out of it, but get all your recyclables in one place.

Mr. Thomas added we feel that this proposal alone will significantly increase the participation rate in recyclables. Obviously that will have a tremendous impact in diverting some of those materials that are now going to the landfill, so this will be an area that we're going to push for strongly through this next budget process.

Mr. Rhodes continued stated I backed up to the last item before we go to our final long-term implementation. Disposal and reuse opportunities; I think one of the things even after nine years and as the industry has continued to change and service municipalities and users is that turning recycling on and off and not something that is done with the snap of a switch. People have to get into the program, they have to get used to the program, and the more and more we can continue on a long term basis to get folks to participate in taking materials available for reuse, the better off the long term costs of the program would be. For a long-term implementation on top of what we've suggested immediately and in the short term, the City should continue to try to develop an implementation user fee, pay-as-you-throw or solid waste collection and disposal. It becoming more and more in the literature and overall a wave that really continues to define how people can participate.

Mr. Thomas stated this is in the past hasn't been viewed with too much favor, however, solid waste costs are going to continue increase. Tonight you'll be hearing about setting the tax rate. I'm sure you're going to be hearing tales of woe, etc. This is a trend that I think the Board of Mayor and Aldermen is going to continue to hear, I think even though it may not be viewed as very popular now, it does make a lot so sense, and basically what we're saying is that we should continue to have as a item for consideration on a fairly regular basis looking at fees for the disposal of solid waste. Again, as Ken Rhodes started off mentioning the level of services that we are providing the residents of Manchester are

extremely happy. We have to find innovative ways of paying for these rather than placing them on the tax rate. So this is going to be an area that we'll continue to look at and raise periodically.

Mr. Rhodes stated along with implementing user fee type programs on a long-term basis to integrate the use of toters, the pay-as-you-throw program and to recycling. Toters do do things; 1) it provides great curbside control, also as a safety thing that I've learned myself that could be significant the community's exposure to a worker claims and things. And finally, define the implementation plan to assist in defining dumpster locations in the private sector for what we would list as non-customers. Those folks that are going to have to transition to private services. Eventually a benchmark for residential has been properties by address and again that's where the customer database is going to come in. Where there are six units or more and where commercials can not limit their weekly use to two toters. This has been a summation presentation to kind of give the public and to let you folks know where we were in our deliberations. Everybody was really quite a delightful experience to myself and the recommendations are summarized in a report that I think all of you have received and with JoAnne McLaughlin's help and everybody in the department, we are here to answer any questions and move forward.

Alderman Thibault asked Frank, has anyone ever taken the time to decipher what in fact recycling or whatever we want to call it, all of it, how does it affect our tax? For instance, is it \$5.00 a year per person or whatever?

Mr. Thomas answered I don't think we've ever put a dollar amount on what is recycling add the share onto your tax rate. The one thing that we want to focus in on, typically the recycling contract is a lump sum contract. You pay X amount of dollars a year to recycle. Whether you recycle one ton of trash or 50,000 tons of trash. So it's important for the City to try to continue promote and expand the participation and recycling. The more we can recycle, the more it's going to be cost effective to do that and in addition, it reduces the amount of materials that we have to throw in the landfill. So for an environmental point of view, it makes sense to do whatever we can to promote recycling.

Alderman Thibault stated I guess what I'm trying to look at Frank, how do you sell this to John Q. out there. In other words, if in fact we're going to come up with fees for different structures of the recycling, if we can tell somebody well look it used to cost you \$100 a year in your taxes, now you won't have to pay that, but it's going to cost you \$55 to do it this way. You know what I mean?

Mr. Thomas replied well I think we've made those types of presentations in the past when we were trying to promote pay-as-you-throw programs, and again, the whole premise behind the pay-as-you-throw is the more you recycle, the less that

you're going to have to pay in fees for the disposal of your trash. So it is very cost effective and I think we did identify the dollar value of potential savings. And I don't have the numbers, but it was actually cheaper to go into a pay-as-you-throw program if you maximized your recycling efforts. Actually we had some staff, JoAnne McLaughlin and some of the employees of the Highway Department, go into a pilot program to maximize their recycling to the point where they were composting some of their household food products, yard waste products, and maximize their recycling, and the reduction in their trash was tremendous. It was somewhere up in like in the 80 percent range. So if you make the solid effort to recycle and to compost and to properly dispose of your yard waste, it does reduce the waste stream significantly.

Alderman Thibault stated but I feel that selling it and policing it are going to be the two biggest problems.

Mr. Thomas stated well I think again that's one of the reasons our suggesting down the road to bring on an enforcement employee. Give that employee the power to write citations as we do now for certain issues, do work with the Building Department, Health Department and to basically step on somebody that isn't following the policies. You have to obviously give them a break first.

Chairman Forest stated Alderman, I think right now implementing some of these is probably what the Public Works Director is asking us to do. There are some short-term things here and there are some long-term and we have to start somewhere. I believe, and Frank tell me if I'm wrong, its costing us \$60 a ton for the solid waste and the more recycling that's taken out of there, the less money it's going to cost us, and overall we may not be lower the tax rate with this, but we can probably prevent it from going up much more as far as the services that they provide for yard waste and solid waste.

Mr. Thomas stated I think again you're right. What we're looking for is to maybe have this committee more or less concur with this report and to forward it onto the full Board of Mayor and Aldermen, with the intent of giving us some direction in moving forward with extending the existing contracts that we have, allow us to start moving ahead to develop RFP's for potentially expanded services, or at least RFP's so that we can bring on new vendors to tighten up some of the deficiencies that we have in the contracts now. The other items can be subjects of additional discussions by your committee as we move into the budget process and then into future budget processes. So this is more or less a roadmap where we would like to see the solid waste program moving over the next few years.

On motion of Alderman Roy, duly seconded by Alderman Thibault, it was voted to refer the report to the full Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

There being no further business to come before the committee, on motion of Alderman Guinta, duly seconded by Alderman Roy, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee