



City of Rockville

MEMORANDUM

September 7, 2004

TO: Catherine Tuck Parrish, Acting City Manager

FROM: Eugene H. Crandall, Director of Public Works

SUBJECT: Refuse Study

City staff has been working with the company, R. W. Beck, since contracting with them in June 2004 to conduct a study of the City's regular refuse program (recycling was not included in the study). Beck was asked to conduct focus groups with City employees; do both local and national benchmarking; conduct actual observances of how the daily operations are performed; and finally, to compile this information and perform a collection alternatives evaluation.

After reviewing the initial data and observances with R. W. Beck, staff asked them to look at five different scenarios. First, eliminate back-door collection; second, convert to fully-automated collection twice per week; third, convert to fully-automated once per week; fourth, convert to semi-automated once per week; and, finally, eliminate the chipper truck and use a rear-loader to collect all yard waste.

The attached report, as well as the briefing that will be presented on September 13, provides an overview of their findings and several recommendations.

I do want to point out that these issues have not been discussed with the residents. If we should get direction from the Mayor and Council to move forward, staff would recommend that R. W. Beck prepare a survey instrument, which will be mailed to City residents explaining the proposals and seeking their input. After receiving resident input, staff would come back to the Mayor and Council with the information and ask for further direction.

One final note, I would like to re-emphasize that for every \$165,000 that is saved, we do reduce the refuse fee by \$1. As you may recall, the current fee is \$25.50 per month, with the fee in FY 2010 projected to be \$37.50 per month. You will see from the information provided by R. W. Beck that even if we implement their recommendations, fee increases will only slow down; fees will not be eliminated or reduced.

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Staff and I agree that we need to look seriously at implementing some of these recommendations. By executing these suggestions, we would accomplish several goals. First, we would standardize the service provided to our residents. Currently, the citizens that get their refuse picked up from a location other than the curb are getting a higher level of service, which is subsidized by the rest of the citizens. Of the few municipalities that still offer back door service, most charge a premium to the citizens that desire this service. Second, we would eliminate the single item that causes the most refuse complaints, and that is, missed trash. Since 60 percent of the residents place their refuse at the curb, the ability to ensure that the other 40 percent gets collected is very difficult. And finally, the injuries and difficulties of back-door pick up not only cost the City thousands of dollars annually in Worker's Compensation claims, but also make it challenging to retain our workforce.

EHC/akm

Cc: Byron Turner, Operation Maintenance Superintendent