

**CITY COUNCIL  
COMMUNICATION:**

**ITEM \_\_\_\_\_**

**98-215**

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER  
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA**

**AGENDA:**  
JUNE 1, 1998

**SYNOPSIS –**

**SUBJECT:**  
CONTINUATION OF  
THE CURBSIDE  
COLLECTION OF  
RECYCLABLES FOR  
THE CITY OF DES  
MOINES

On October 6, 1997, by Roll Call No. 97-3397, the City Council received and filed a staff report on the status of Des Moines’ solid waste management program. The report detailed the status of the City’ s solid waste enterprise fund and advised of Metro Waste Authority’ s (MWA) curbside recycling program “ Curb It” deficit. On January 19, 1998, by Roll Call No. 98-212, the City Council adopted a resolution calling for Polk County to provide the funding required through a county-wide tax to sustain the Curb It Program. On March 3, 1998, Polk County rejected the idea of a special tax levy; however, they agreed to provide a one time only \$1.2 million grant toward the MWA’ s total annual Curb It Program cost of \$2.8 million program which includes Des Moines and all other member communities. The one-time grant would apply to the 1998/99 fiscal year only and is contingent upon member communities agreeing to fund the Curb It Program through June 30, 2001. The remaining \$1.6 million required for the program through June 30, 1999, would be paid by the MWA. The purpose of this report is to present Council with a plan to continue curbside recycling for the City.

**TYPE:**  
**RESOLUTION**  
ORDINANCE  
RECEIVE/FILE

**SUBMITTED BY:**  
JOHN BELLIZZI  
PUBLIC WORKS  
DIRECTOR

**FISCAL IMPACT —**

Revenue and expenses associated with the curbside collection of recyclables will apply to the solid waste enterprise user account only and will not impact the General Fund. A fee increase of \$1.75 per month per household will be required, effective July 1, 1999.

**RECOMMENDATION —**

**Approve a curbside recycling program for the City through June 30, 2001, based on the following funding arrangements:**

- **Polk County and the MWA to fund “ Curb It” from July 1, 1998, through June 30, 1999.**

- **The City to fund the curbside recycling program from July 1, 1999, through June 30, 2001, through a solid waste user fee increase of \$1.75 per month for all households.**

## **BACKGROUND —**

### **Iowa Waste Stream Reduction Goals**

The requirement to recycle was set forth in House File 753 passed by the 73rd Iowa General Assembly in 1989. That legislation established waste stream reduction goals of 25 percent by the Year 1994 and 50 percent by the Year 2000. In addition, the legislation required that comprehensive waste management plans contain a methodology for implementing a program of separation of waste including, but not limited to, glass, plastic, paper, and metal. To date, MWA claims a reduction rate of 35 percent in the quantities of materials landfilled. The reduction has been achieved primarily through various commercial recycling and residential yard debris composting programs. According to the MWA, the Curb It Program accounts for approximately 6 percent of the waste stream reduction achieved.

### **Curbside Recycling (Curb It) Program**

In an effort to achieve established landfill reduction goals, the MWA initiated a curbside recycling program (Curb It) for selected residential recyclables. The program, which costs \$2.8 million per year for MWA member communities, was designed to be funded through its duration with fees collected at the landfill. A recent analysis by the MWA, however, shows that the existing \$30 per ton fee at the landfill is no longer competitive with the disposal fees charged at other landfills. Consequently, the MWA is experiencing landfill tonnage reductions with a corresponding loss in revenue to fund the Curb It Program. Based on the loss of revenue, the MWA has stated they could no longer fund the Curb It Program past July, 1999. From July 1, 1999, to July 1, 2001, the MWA will charge member communities \$2.00 per household per month to continue Curb It. Des Moines residents would pay only \$1.75 per month because our in-house collection costs are less than the contracted rates charged in other MWA member communities.

### **Continuing Curb It in Des Moines**

According to the MWA, approximately 60 percent of residents in Des Moines participate in the Curb It Program on a monthly basis. The materials are currently being collected by City of Des Moines' solid waste crews under the fourth year of a five year contract which was awarded to the City of Des Moines following a competitive bid process conducted by the MWA. The materials are delivered to a local processor under contract with the MWA to handle the recyclables. In addition to the Curb It Program, the MWA has contracted for operation of a drop-off recycling center located at 1817 Euclid Avenue. The center accepts all materials of the Curb It Program plus scrap tires, metal, wood, and old clothing.

To continue Curb It in Des Moines, it is recommended that the City commit to the program only through June 30, 2001, at which time the City Council can decide if they wish to continue. Polk County and the MWA will fund the program from July, 1998, to June 30, 1999. As of July 1, 1999, the cost to all City of Des Moines households will be \$1.75 per month whether they choose to use the program or not. The MWA will continue to promote Curb It through education and report program results to the State of Iowa. In addition, the MWA will allow the use of their current contracted recyclables processor by the City and will subsidize all fees that would be payable to the processor if newspaper markets fall below a specified level.

Continuing curbside recycling on a user fee basis, like solid waste collection, lowers the per-unit fee by spreading the cost of the program evenly to all residents. Recycling conserves resources, preserves landfill space, and contributes toward achieving State of Iowa goals for waste stream reduction which benefits Des Moines as a whole. In addition, recycling promotes a "waste not" ethic.

### **FUTURE RECYCLING OPTIONS**

Upon completion of the two year agreement for the continuation of Curb It from July 1, 1999, through June 30, 2001, the City of Des Moines may wish to consider other options for municipal recycling including a subscription service and/or drop-offs.

#### **Subscription Type Service**

A subscription-based program would ensure that only those using the service pay for the service. For example, the following table

shows current per-household costs for the curbside collection of recyclables at varying levels of program participation. As shown, if only 10,000 households (16 percent) subscribe for the service, the estimated fee would be \$6.50 per unit/month. This is due to the fact that a minimum amount of personnel and equipment are needed to traverse the city's 800 miles of streets each week to collect recyclables at the curb. Of course, the greater the number of participants, the lower the per-unit subscription service cost.

**Estimated Subscription Service Rates for the Curbside Collection of Recyclables**

Level of Households Participating	10,000	15,000	20,000	25,000	30,000	35,000	40,000
Per Unit Fee	\$6.50	\$5.00	\$4.00	\$3.50	\$3.25	\$3.00	\$2.50

**Drop-Off Recycling**

Drop-off recycling programs require participants to transport their recyclables to specific locations. The MWA currently operates a drop-off center, under contract, located at 1817 Euclid Avenue in Des Moines. The center accepts all the materials currently collected via Curb It and also takes textiles, wood, and tires. The Authority no longer recommends multiple drop-off sites, i.e., at grocery stores, due to previous problems experienced with the illegal dumping of trash and yard debris and hazardous materials at the sites. While drop-off recycling is more economical because the resident is transporting the recyclables, siting a permanent facility is often difficult and actual use is limited because of the inconvenience residents experience in stockpiling and transporting the recyclables.

**SUMMARY**

In summary, staff recommends continuation of the Curb It Program in Des Moines through June 30, 2001, on a city-wide user fee basis. Polk County and the MWA have agreed to jointly fund Curb It from July, 1998, to June 30, 1999, providing member communities pay for the program through June 30, 2001. For the City of Des Moines, the only community collecting its own recyclables, the fee would be \$1.75 per household per month from July 1, 1999, to June 30, 2001. After June 30, 2001, the City Council would be free to decide whether to continue the Curb It Program, go to a subscription

service, or use drop-off recycling centers only.

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