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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 2, 2015

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:
Public Hearing, Second Reading and Final Passage of an Ordinance Repealing and Reenacting Chapter 1 (Solid Waste Control), Title 5 (Transportation and Environmental Services) of The Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia 1981, as amended. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

ISSUE: Consideration of a proposed ordinance to amend certain definitions pertaining to solid waste collection and disposal and to clarify the scope of the use of the City charge for collection and disposal service.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council pass the attached ordinance to amend the definition of yard debris and clarify the scope of the use of the City charge for collection and disposal service on first reading, and to set it for public hearing and final passage on December 12, 2015.

BACKGROUND: Staff reviews operations in comparison to the Alexandria Solid Waste Control Code annually. As operations change, changes to align the Code with operations are identified. In this case the proposed Code change includes amending the definition of yard debris to include leaves as well as ensuring the definitions included in the enabling ordinance reflect the City's current recycling practice and fall leaf collection program.

With regard to clarifying the definition of yard debris to include leaves, the Code would thereby make it clear that the collection of leaves is part of what can be paid for through funds collected as the Residential Refuse Fee.

With regard to paying for the collection and processing of recyclables, crews have collected recyclables separately from trash and garbage since 1998. This material has been sorted and processed to be used again as a raw material for manufacturing new products. Payment for the collection of recyclables has been from the Residential Refuse Fee. The proposed change makes clear that the management of recyclables is part of what the fee covers.

DISCUSSION: The Code sets forth that City residents ('required users') participate in the City-provided solid waste collection system unless they are exempt (by satisfying conditions specified in the Code). The Code also establishes a fee (Residential Refuse Fee) to be paid by these required users of the system.

Currently, the Code does not explicitly state that the cost for the collection of recyclables can be paid for by this fee. However, in practice, the fee has been used to pay for these services since 1998. This situation was an unintended consequence of defining '*Recyclable materials'* as separate and distinct from '*Solid waste'* (staff at the time did not want 'recyclable materials' to be considered 'solid waste' and just thrown away).

In addition to a trash container, 90% of 'required users' have a recycling collection container located on their property and, on any given week, 65% of required users set out recyclables for collection. Charging a separate fee for recycling services would be administratively inefficient since the recipients of trash collection service are the same customers that participate in the recycling program. In addition, a separate fee for recycling services gives the appearance that this service is 'opt-in' or a 'choice' and that is not the policy direction the City has chosen to pursue with regard to recycling.

In much the same way, by specifically including leaves in the definition of yard waste, the proposed revision clarifies the City is within its authority to use the Residential Refuse Fee to pay for the autumn leaf collection program. As is the case with recycling services, the recipients of City-provided leaf collection services are the same customers who receive City-provided trash collection services and pay the fee.

FISCAL IMPACT: Since both recycling services and leaf collection programs have been included in the calculation of the Residential Refuse Fee in both current and prior years, there is no fiscal impact in this regard.

ATTACHMENTS:
Attachment 1: Ordinance Cover
Attachment 2: Ordinance

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