



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** JUNE 19, 2019

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

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

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Consideration of FY 2020 WasteSmart Initiatives.

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of FY 2020 WasteSmart initiatives supported by the approved increase in the FY 2020 residential refuse fee.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council approve the staff recommendation for implementation of FY 2020 WasteSmart initiatives.

**BACKGROUND:** On May 1, 2019, the City Council unanimously adopted a FY 2020 residential refuse fee of \$411, which reflected a 10.2% increase in this fee to compensate for increases in contractor costs and the impact of China's new strict recycling processing standards. Through the Add/Delete process, Council also determined that \$5 of the increase (\$102,846) was to be used to fund FY 2020 WasteSmart initiatives contingent on Council approval for implementation.

WasteSmart is the City's 20-year strategic plan for solid waste management and was unanimously adopted by Council on January 12, 2019 (Attached). However, plan adoption was not a fiscal commitment to implement every recommended action at this time as is the case for other City Strategic plans. The decision to implement was to be determined through the annual budget process.

The City annually assesses a residential refuse fee paid by 18,871 customers, mostly single-family and townhome owners. The fee pays for collection and disposal costs associated with weekly trash and recycling collection, yard waste/brush collection, household hazardous waste center operations and special collections including Leaf Collection. The fee is listed on real estate tax bills and paid semiannually. Trash and recycling collection from businesses and multifamily homes (which comprise more than 70% of the City's waste stream) is mostly collected by private haulers. The City's 20,250 residential customers (including tax and fee relief programs) give the City high marks for solid waste, recycling and yard waste collection services in the annual resident survey, with citizen satisfaction rates exceeding 80%.

**DISCUSSION:** In Budget Question #13, staff had previously provided details as to the line-item costs and benefits of proposed WasteSmart initiatives which had been included in the City Manager's FY 2020 Alternative Options List. The Manager had provided an option to increase the refuse fee to \$417, with several specific WasteSmart initiatives that were scalable. Given the Council-approved refuse fee and guidance regarding making implementation contingent on Council approval, a breakdown and summary of proposed WasteSmart initiatives that can be implemented within the approved budget (\$102,846) is included below:

1. Glass Drop-Off Program (\$40,000)
  - a. This service would cover the operations and disposal costs for the implementation of four glass recycling drop-off facilities across the City. Source separation of glass will ensure its beneficial reuse through a partnership with Fairfax County. Glass collected will be transferred to a Fairfax facility where it will be cleaned, crushed, and reused for landscaping, paving, and construction projects such as backfill, pipe bedding material, and sand. Staff is reviewing options to utilize sand for sandbags distributed during flooding events. There are strong environmental benefits since much of glass collected by the City currently ends up in the landfill after the recycling sorting process. This program is a pilot for a larger scaled implementation which could include drop-off partnerships with local businesses (grocery stores, breweries, etc.)
  - b. Upon evaluating the state of the recycling market, staff will develop a plan to expand glass drop-off centers and/or potentially eliminate glass from single stream recycling. (Evaluation to be done with staff time in FY 2020 to FY 2021).
2. Reduce and Reuse Program (\$5,000)
  - a. A scalable pilot program called 'Share-A-Bag' designed to reduce single-use disposable plastic bags and encourage use of reusable tote bags. Plastic bags are one of the top contaminants in the recycling bin and this program would also serve as an education and outreach opportunity.
  - b. Online reuse directory of local vendors that provide repair, donate, and consign (second-hand reuse shop) services. The goal is to reduce overall waste in both trash and recycling streams.
3. Education and Outreach (\$50,846)
  - a. Launch a Recycle Right education campaign to reduce confusion on what materials go where and reduce contamination in the recycling stream. Two mailers will be included with targeted messaging on what is accepted/not accepted in recycling and an issue campaign that plastic bags should not go in the recycling bin.
  - b. Participate in a regional recycle right campaign allowing the City's investment to go farther. The goal is a decrease in contamination of the recycling stream which will result in cost reduction for recycling processing.
  - c. Improve digital print materials (with multi-language translation) and refresh the resource recovery website.
  - d. Develop online *How to Dispose* sorting tool and online *Sorting Game* for students
4. Yard Waste Outreach (\$7,000)
  - a. Expand outreach efforts to residents on City's services to collect and mulch or compost yard waste. Education materials (e.g. mailer, social media graphics, oops tags) would be developed to encourage residents to not use plastic bags to contain yard waste. This would have significant

environmental impacts as an increase in yard waste collection would improve beneficial reuse as mulch and compost.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Because Council determined that \$5 of the refuse fee increase would be used for WasteSmart initiatives, it previously approved a budget of \$102,846 for FY 2020 WasteSmart initiatives. The staff proposal for the implementation is as follows:

1. Glass Drop-Off Program: \$40,000
  2. Reduce and Reuse Program: \$5,000
  3. Education and Outreach: \$50,846
  4. Yard Waste Outreach: \$7,000
- TOTAL: \$102,846

If Council approves the implementation plan as outlined, there would be no additional fiscal impact since Council has already approved the FY 2020 residential refuse fee.

**ATTACHMENT:** WasteSmart Strategic Plan

**STAFF:**

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager

Yon Lambert, Director, T&ES

Jeff DuVal, Deputy Director, T&ES/Operations

Helen Lee, Environmental Program Manager, T&ES/Operations/Resource Recovery