



City of Gainesville Agenda Item Report

File Number: 2025-848

Agenda Date: October 23, 2025

Department: Public Works Department

Title: 2025-848 Solid Waste Division Update (B)

Department: Public Works

Description: Status update and recommendations for Food Waste Pilot Program, Food Waste components of the Zero Waste Ordinance, Commercial Franchise Fee Restructuring options, and Ordinance Options for Commercial Haulers.

Fiscal Note: If the Residential Curbside Food Waste Pilot Program is sunset the City would save \$163,000 annually for contractual service costs for pickup and processing of food waste and spend \$3,380 in tipping fees for the 52 tons of food waste picked up by the program resulting in a savings of \$159,620 from the Solid Waste Fund balance for Fiscal Year 2026. The total cost to the public for the Food Waste collection city-wide is estimated to be \$4.7 million to \$24.2 million annually.

Explanation: At the December 12, 2024, General Policy Meeting, staff provided an update on the “Pay As You Throw” campaign, service costs and proposed fees, status of the Exclusive Hauler Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) and options for rebidding exclusive residential collection only. The City Commission directed staff to advertise the ordinance to amend Appendix A Solid Waste cart fee increases to balance residential service costs due to inflation, issue the Exclusive Hauler ITN in the first quarter of calendar year 2025, and review Commercial Franchise Fee restructuring. The City Commission also directed staff to bring back ordinance-based options and information on the benefits of having an exclusive commercial hauler agreement. ([Agenda Item 2024-903](#))

In follow up to the Commission’s direction on December 12, 2024, the Fee Schedule (Appendix A) for residential cart increases were amended by Ordinance No. 2024-903 ([Agenda Item 2024-903](#)) and went into effect on April 1, 2025. The Exclusive Residential Curbside Collection ITN was published on October 3, 2025, on OpenGov. The new agreement is expected to be executed and effective October 1, 2026, replacing the current Residential Curbside Collection agreement, which expires September 30, 2026.

This update will include: 1) discussion on the Residential Curbside Food Waste Collection Pilot Program including its potential sunset; 2) presentation of Commercial Franchise Fee restructuring options for commercial collection and feedback from haulers regarding the restructuring; 3) presentation of ordinance options for commercial haulers to reflect that of an exclusive hauler agreement including mandatory reporting of violations and container size; 4) bring to attention current issues with C&D hauler practices and discuss potential Appendix A updates to address; and 5) ordinance options for prescription drug drop-off and disposal. Requesting feedback and direction from the General Policy Committee accordingly.

The City has two food waste collection initiatives: the Curbside Food Waste Collection Pilot and the Zero Waste Ordinance which requires food waste collection at multi-family properties, food generators (grocery stores) that are 25,000 square foot or larger and commercial establishments that generate more than 1 cubic yard of food waste per week. These initiatives are intended to divert food waste from the landfill, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create a compost product, however, the current waste stream in Alachua County is disposed of in the New River Landfill which has methane gas capture. The methane gas captured at the landfill is converted to renewable natural gas, diverted into a pipeline for use and the City receives credit towards its recycling percentage. While there are environmental benefits to food waste composting and renewable natural gas generation, it is more cost effective to the public to dispose of food waste in the landfill without additional greenhouse gases being released to the atmosphere.

The Curbside Food Waste Pilot started in 2021 and is currently contracted through December 31, 2025. Annual costs of the pilot have increased due to inflation and house count (200 to 700); the original cost to the City was \$16,995 and is now \$164,360 annually. Currently, the program is estimated to remove 52 tons annually at a cost of \$2,885/ton. Disposal of food waste to the New River Landfill costs \$65/ton or \$3,380 annually. If the Residential Curbside Food Waste Pilot Program is sunset, the City would save \$163,000 annually for contractual service costs for pickup and processing of food waste. The total cost to the public for the Food Waste collection city-wide is estimated to be \$4 million to \$22.5 million annually. Multi-family food waste processing is estimated to be \$321 thousand to \$857 thousand annually plus startup costs. Commercial location food waste processing is estimated to be \$337 thousand to \$810 thousand annually. Due to cost, staff recommends sunsetting of the Curbside Food Waste Pilot Program and revisions to the Zero Waste Ordinance.

The City's current ordinance for Commercial Franchise Fee haulers requires 15% of gross revenues. Restructuring the Commercial Franchise Fee to a per cubic yard fee will allow the City to control the rates charged to each commercially collected unit ensuring consistent fees for each commercial customer by the City based on their solid waste container size; this would place the commercial market more in line with the City's pay as you throw campaign. This also provides for reliable franchise fee data and payment accountability from the hauler. With restructuring, there are options to keep solid waste revenues neutral or increase solid waste revenues. Staff is seeking feedback from solid waste haulers and the Commission on restructuring of the franchise fee.

As follow up to the December 12, 2024, Solid Waste Update, staff was directed to bring back ordinance-based options that provides the benefits of having an exclusive commercial hauler agreement. While there are limited adjustments that can be made to obtain the same benefits, staff recommends mandatory reporting from commercial haulers of its customers that do not order services that align with the Zero Waste Ordinance and mandatory container size reporting for its customers. This change to the ordinance is being requested to ensure the City is notified of habitual recycling contamination issues or non-compliance within the commercial market such as refusal to provide recycling options or refusal to provide multiple pick-ups per week. Container size reporting will assist with franchise fee calculations.

There is a separate fee schedule for construction and demolition (C&D) haulers in the Zero Waste Ordinance. There are issues with new haulers entering the market without a C&D franchise fee permit and dumping outside of designated C&D transfer station to avoid higher tipping fees; staff would like a repeat offender ordinance to fine and stop un-franchised haulers. Additionally, consideration should be made for a flat fee for all C&D haulers opposed to number of wheels on a haulers vehicle.

The Zero Waste Ordinance requires Pharmacies to provide on-site publicly accessible containers for the collection and disposal of prescription medicines. The City may be the only jurisdiction in the state to require on-site containers and has received a concern from one pharmacy operator. Staff recommends expanding the ordinance to provide other options, such as pre-paid mail envelopes.

Strategic Connection:

- Goal 1: Equitable Community
- Goal 2: More Sustainable Community
- Goal 3: A Great Place to Live and Experience
- Goal 4: Resilient Local Economy
- Goal 5: "Best in Class" Neighbor Services

Recommendation 1: The General Policy Committee directs City Manager to: 1) sunset the Curbside Food Waste Collection Pilot Program effective December 31, 2025; and 2) research and return with options to address staff concerns related to construction and demolition haulers.

Recommendation 2: The General Policy Committee direct the City Attorney to work with the City Manager to advertise an ordinance to: 1) eliminate multi-family food waste collection requirements; 2) eliminate front of house food waste collection requirements; 3) permit pharmacies to have options other than containers for drug collection; 4) add mandatory reporting requirements of violations for haulers; and 5) require haulers to provide collection container types and sizes.

Recommendation 3: The General Policy Committee 1) hear feedback from haulers regarding the commercial franchise fee restructuring; and 2) provide feedback or direction to Staff regarding commercial franchise fee restructuring.