

Recycling Facility Meeting - November 15, 2024

Meeting Location: 333 West Ave Bldg C

Roll Call:

Board Members Present:

Anna Stout

Dennis Simpson

Scott Beilfuss

City Staff Present:

Andrea Phillips, Interim City Manager

Jay Valentine, Director of General Services

Jerod Timothy, Deputy Director of General Services

Angela French, Waste Reduction Coordinator

Purpose: Discuss the city's recycling program progress, challenges, and future direction.

Andrea Phillips opened the meeting by welcoming attendees, including council members, city officials, and members of the public. Andrea provided an overview of the meeting agenda, which included program updates, a discussion of challenges and next steps, and an opportunity for public comment. She also announced an optional tour of the recycling facility after the discussion.

Jay Valentine gave a presentation outlining the goals and recent developments in the city's recycling program. He emphasized the importance of maintaining public trust, ensuring service reliability and stability, and offering an affordable and transparent program. The program prioritizes sustainability and environmental stewardship, supported by a strong zero-waste education initiative. Transparency and accountability are key pillars, with all recyclable materials locally processed and sent directly to mills for reuse. Valentine also highlighted recent infrastructure upgrades, including improvements to the tipping floor, which have enhanced efficiency and cleanliness. However, he noted that manual sorting processes remain labor-intensive and pose a limitation on the program's overall capacity.

Jay Valentine also reviewed the timeline of the city's recycling program, highlighting significant milestones. In 1992, Grand Junction Curbside Recycling Indefinitely (GJCRI) was launched, marking the beginning of the city's organized recycling efforts. In 2017, the US recycling system faced challenges following China's National Sword policy, which reduced markets for recyclables due to stricter contamination standards. In 2020, City Council asked CRI to expand their recycling to a larger majority of the population, but an agreement was ultimately not finalized. In 2022, the city purchased GJCRI, retaining its staff and infrastructure to ensure program continuity. During 2023-2024, the city implemented the new automated dual-stream recycling program along with seasonal yard waste collection. With about one-third of the city phased in, the program has achieved an average participation rate of 42%, with notable variations across areas: Phase 1 (Downtown) reached 79% participation, Phase 2 (Orchard Mesa) saw 25%, and Phase 3 (North Area) recorded 46%. The drop-off remains a staple of the community, with over 250 vehicles visiting per day. The Recycling Division also offers a food waste pilot program, which diverted over 100,000 lbs. of food waste in 2023. Angela and Jerod discussed the lower participation rate in Phase 2 and emphasized

the need for increased outreach in the area, as residents may be unaware that the program is included in the city's solid waste services.

Jay then addressed the challenges currently facing the city's recycling program. He highlighted capacity issues, noting the limited ability to expand due to the constraints of manual sorting. There is significant pent-up demand for services from both commercial and residential customers, and efforts to implement recycling in public spaces and at events are hindered by current processing infrastructure and capacity. Operational limitations further complicate program expansion, including insufficient storage space and the absence of advanced sorting technology. Additionally, the labor-intensive nature of the sorting process restricts the scalability of the program. Jay also highlighted the recent facility improvements, which include a new indoor tip floor and conveyor belt. The upgrades have enhanced sorting efficiency and provided temporary relief, but processing capacity remains the same.

Jerod Timothy and Angela French presented an overview of Colorado's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation under House Bill 22-1355. This law transfers the financial responsibility for recycling from consumers and municipalities to producers, creating potential funding opportunities to support collection and processing operations. The city intends to align its recycling program with the EPR requirements, with reimbursements expected to begin in 2026. While the program offers promising opportunities, some details remain unclear, including compensation rates, the range of accepted materials, and reporting requirements, as the program plan continues to develop. Additionally, the recycling division plans to seek grant funding to support its initiatives.

Andrea invited public comments and questions during the meeting.

Ken Stevens from WM stated his appreciation of the dedicated people that use the drop site, especially in the winter. Mr. Stevens also inquired about the about the tons per hour output at the current facility given the upgrades the city has made. Mr. Stevens also suggested exploring partnerships with existing facilities to address capacity challenges, Curtis Gardner with WM stated they submitted a proposal where they have outlined that they have significant capacity to grow, which would allow the city to expand their service area today and alleviate capacity issues at the current facility. Jeff Kendal from Bruin Waste highlighted the importance of regional collaboration to tackle infrastructure gaps in the Western Slope.

The group discussed next steps and scheduled a follow-up meeting for November 25th at 11:30 a.m. The upcoming meeting will focus on reviewing RFP proposal summaries and exploring potential options for expanding the city's recycling program. The meeting concluded with an optional tour of the recycling facility, allowing attendees to view current infrastructure firsthand.