



WESTMINSTER

Staff Report

TO: The Mayor and Members of the City Council

DATE: December 17, 2009

SUBJECT: Briefing and Post-City Council Briefing Agenda for December 21, 2009

PREPARED BY: J. Brent McFall, City Manager

Please Note: Study Sessions and Post City Council briefings are open to the public, and individuals are welcome to attend and observe. However, these briefings are not intended to be interactive with the audience, as this time is set aside for City Council to receive information, make inquiries, and provide Staff with policy direction.

Looking ahead to Monday night's Briefing and Post-City Council meeting briefing, the following schedule has been prepared:

Dinner	6:00 P.M.
Council Briefing (<i>The public is welcome to attend.</i>)	6:30 P.M.
CITY COUNCIL MEETING	7:00 P.M.
POST BRIEFING (<i>The public is welcome to attend.</i>)	

PRESENTATIONS

None at this time

CITY COUNCIL REPORTS

1. Report from Mayor (5 minutes)
2. Reports from City Councillors (10 minutes)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None at this time

INFORMATION ONLY

1. Community Solid Waste and Recycling Project with Skumatz Economic Research Associates, Inc. (Attachments)

Items may come up between now and Monday night. City Council will be apprised of any changes to the post-briefing schedule.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Brent McFall
City Manager



WESTMINSTER

Staff Report

Information Only Staff Report
December 21, 2009



SUBJECT: Community Solid Waste and Recycling Project with Skumatz Economic Research Associates, Inc.

PREPARED BY: Rachel Harlow-Schalk, Environmental and Administrative Services Officer
Carey Rangel, Environmental Analyst

Summary Statement

This report is for City Council information only and requires no action by City Council.

City Council's Strategic Plan Goal of a Beautiful and Environmentally Sensitive City identifies the objective of having a convenient recycling program with high participation available to residents and businesses. In order to adequately provide informed, comprehensive recommendations on how to achieve this objective, the Green Team, with the agreement of the Environmental Advisory Board, has contracted with Skumatz Economic Research Associates Incorporated (SERA) to assess the solid waste and recycling services in the City. SERA is a local consulting firm with a national client base that specializes in providing solid waste and recycling evaluations that include economic evaluation, service efficiency and financial services information.

Background Information

The 2008 Citizen Survey found that a minority of residents reported using curbside recycling. Among those who did not use this service, about one-third stated it was not available to them through their trash collector, another third said that cost was prohibitive and the remaining reported either a lack of information or they had a preference for drop-off recycling.

In addition to these survey results, Staff and City Council consistently receive comments on the lack of recycling in the community, lack of ability to recycle including when visiting businesses and the often increased cost that must be paid for recycling services. In 2009, City Council identified the objective of having a convenient recycling program for residents and businesses with a high level of participation. The Green Team, in coordination with the Environmental Advisory Board, began evaluating ways to meet Council's objective and quickly learned they did not have enough information to make recommendations.

Based on this need for more information and the role of the EAB in this work, the Green Team recommended to the Board that an expert be hired to help understand the current state of trash and recycling services in Westminster. The Green Team recommended contracting with Skumatz Economic Research Associates Incorporated (SERA) and the EAB agreed with this approach at their November 24, 2009 meeting. SERA is a local consulting firm with a national client base that specializes in providing economic evaluation and rate services for solid waste agencies (see Attachment A for further information on SERA). SERA is a leading firm in:

- providing solid waste service evaluation, tracking and performance/efficiency benchmarking.
- identifying solid waste source reduction possibilities.
- creating solid waste education programs.

SERA has developed and maintained a unique database with information on over 1,400 communities nationwide. The database includes community demographics and disposal costs enabling SERA to conduct a detailed, relevant analysis for Westminster.

This project will provide a comprehensive analysis of the City's current solid waste and recycling system to include:

- identifying services haulers can provide including large item collection;
- assessing what other local, comparable-sized communities are doing;
- deriving a baseline of current residential and business recycling efforts; and
- assessing best options for achieving Council's recycling goal.

SERA will survey residential recycling rates based on trash set-out for pickup and residential opinion via online survey. Surveying will also be completed with community businesses to understand their recycling efforts and trash haulers will be interviewed to gain greater understanding of services made available in the community (see Attachment B for details on tasks to be completed). By conducting a comprehensive review of current services and gaps in services, the Green Team will then provide to the EAB well-informed recommendations that they can then consider for submittal to City Council.

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Completion of this solid waste and recycling research will provide support to Council's Strategic Plan goal of a Beautiful and Environmentally Sensitive City and specifically Council's objective of a convenient recycling program for residents and businesses with a high level of participation.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Brent McFall
City Manager

Attachments

- Attachment A – “Qualifications of the Project Team”
- Attachment B – “Tasks to be Completed for Westminster”

ATTACHMENT A QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PROJECT TEAM

Lisa A. Skumatz, Ph.D., Principal.

Dr. Skumatz is an economist and Principal at Skumatz Economic Research Associates, Inc. (SERA). She has a nationwide reputation in integrated planning solid waste, program evaluation, rates and revenue options, economic and policy analysis, and scenario analysis/forecasting for solid waste agencies. She is focused on how facilities and programs work in the real world. She maintains SERA's in-house database of programs, policies, costs, performance, and other data from more than 1,300 communities across the United States that includes all 7000+ PAYT (pay-as-you-throw) system communities, single stream material recovery facilities (MRFs), and solid waste initiatives and programs in all 50 states. The databases also include information on facilities, rates, services, recycling and yard waste program design and performance, collection efficiencies, policies, demographics, tonnage and participation data. This data is used to examine performance and "fit", estimate program impacts, identify innovative program options, evaluate efficiencies, conduct cost and performance benchmarking, and to develop system changes, if necessary, for client communities.

Specific areas of Dr. Skumatz expertise include:

- Integrated Planning/Evaluation and Zero Waste Programs
- Tracking and benchmarking
- Best Practices Identification
- Solid Waste Collection Rate Studies and Pay-As-You-Throw programs
- Data Collection and Surveys

Dr. Skumatz has the unique distinction of winning the National Lifetime Achievement Awards from both the National Recycling Coalition and International Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). She serves on Colorado's Statewide Legislative Task Force and Advisory Committee on Electronics Waste and on Boulder County's Resource Conservation Board. Dr. Skumatz also formerly served on the King County, Washington Commission for Marketing Recyclable Materials and the Heinz / Wirth / Harvard Recycle 2000 Task Force. She has chaired the citizen Solid Waste Advisory committees in Seattle, Washington and in Superior, Colorado. She is active in several local civic and national environmental organizations and is on the Board of several non-profit organizations. She is also an elected official in Colorado and on the Colorado Municipal League's Executive Committee. Dr. Skumatz holds a Ph.D. in Economics (econometrics) from the Johns Hopkins University.

David Freeman, Senior Project Analyst

Mr. Freeman is an environmental analyst with SERA, Inc. He has collected data on a wide variety of recycling and solid waste programs across the United States including recycling, yard waste, source reduction, electronics, single stream recycling, education / outreach programs, and others. This work has provided information for benchmarking, program potential and performance, costs, and other planning and evaluation purposes. These data have also been used to identify cutting edge programs and provide key data on factors affecting program performance. He has investigated a host of residential programs, but also brings expertise in commercial and multi-family program strategies, including ordinances, mandates, incentives, service provision options (districting / etc.), and other strategies. He has led analytical and modeling work for pay-as-you-throw programs (PAYT) and program option analyses for many Colorado municipalities including Vail, Boulder County, Edgewater and for Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Mr. Freeman was also one of the two key analysts to conduct work for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment investigating strategies for increased recycling in the State. He is currently leading a grant on social marketing strategies to increase recycling in a community in Colorado.

Mr. Freeman leads SERA's work in residential and commercial waste surveys, set out surveys, and waste sorts and has conducted these assignments for communities across Colorado, California, North Carolina, and elsewhere. On a number of projects he has conducted detailed interviews with haulers and city staff

and has excellent capabilities obtaining cooperation with all kinds of interviewees. His strengths include an understanding of how the information will be used ensuring he conducts appropriate follow-up on complex analytical issues.

Mr. Freeman has co-authored papers in key recycling journals and presented at regional and national recycling conferences. He holds a B.A. in Environmental Science and Economics from Bucknell University.

SERA Past Project Descriptions – Small Sample

Boulder County Zero Waste Plan – Zero waste programs divert 85% or greater solid waste from landfills. For Boulder County, Colorado SERA conducted work to model impacts and costs from more than 80 zero waste program options developed through a stakeholder process. The programs covered organics (yard waste, food waste, and slash), residential and curbside recycling programs, construction and demolition material, e-waste and a variety of special materials. The model also estimated impacts from an array of policies (including bans and incentives) and funding options. SERA crafted Tier 1 and 2 options for packages to try to reach zero waste and worked with the stakeholder committee to identify more aggressive programs to provide options to reach zero waste goals. This work required SERA survey other communities for comparables, programs, rates, etc.

Diversion Potential Study / Model for Fort Collins – Programs to Reach 50%: SERA conducted a project for the City of Fort Collins to identify program options that could enable the City to reach its Council-adopted 50% landfill waste diversion goal. SERA used data from its in-house database of programs around the nation to estimate the program performance and cost for different programs and its list of residential, business, hauler, C&D, and other programs to select program options. The project included 1) assessment of measurement options and selection of a preferred tracking approach; 2) assessment of current program performance, 3) technical program potential work and options development, and construction of a diversion potential analysis model, 4) extensive interaction with a stakeholder group, and 5) a significant public involvement process. The project was based on a concept of diversifying the sectors for program elements to maximize the success potential. That is, programs affecting commercial businesses, haulers, households, builders, and a variety of other actors were to be included in the final package. To provide input and potentially buy-in to the project and its results, a Blue Ribbon panel of regional solid waste diversion-related businesses and stakeholders was assembled. SERA conducted residential and commercial surveys regarding satisfaction, behaviors, preferences, willingness to pay and attitudinal / demographic components. SERA also completed set out surveys for both residential and commercial. This information was then used to assess the potential for various program options. A public meeting was held to gauge public reaction to three alternative program sets. At the conclusion of the technical analysis, city staff was responsible for using the technical results and recommendations and overlaying political considerations to craft the most appropriate set of programs for the city, and presenting the results to City Council.

Diversion Potential Study and Model – Pitkin County, CO: SERA conducted a project for Pitkin County, CO that was very similar to the work conducted for Fort Collins. This project involved several key efforts: 1) a gap analysis to identify services and programs that are lacking in the county, 2) program options analysis including which programs, incentives and policies may show greatest potential for a cost-effective integrated solid waste system for the County; 3) waste diversion potential modeling, using real-world quantitative information on options, with tailored data on forecast tonnages and waste composition to estimate the costs and diversion from programs and packages to select programs for Pitkin County; 4) extensive public process for review and refinement, and 5) implementation assistance, including possible request for proposals. SERA's work included extensive surveys of residential and commercial customers as well as stakeholder interviews. The work focused on developing a diversified mix of programs, policies, and facilities best suited to the situation in Pitkin County. This project included a waste sorting survey and residential and commercial surveys.

Diversion Potential Assessment Model – Colorado University at Boulder: In this project, SERA conducted a detailed waste sort examining the composition of waste for the five major building types on campus. SERA used a variety of drivers to forecast tonnage for each building and material type, and developed a program design module that examined the impact of various diversion programs and policies on materials and tonnages diverted as well as overall costs. The model was used to help the University identify its next priority programs, assess cutting-edge composting alternatives and identify needed facilities. This model is used extensively by the client in assessing additional program options. Similar work: SERA conducted similar broad options planning and assessment projects for the State of Oregon, Honolulu, Hawaii and many others.

Pay-as-you-throw (PAYT), Rates, Incentives, and Policy Analyses – Multiclient study and USEPA: (Skumatz Lead.). Dr. Skumatz has the most detailed understanding of PAYT programs in the United States. She conducted nationwide analyses of PAYT incentive rates to assess the program's growth, impacts, and costs, as well as detailed issues related to implementation in communities across the US and Canada. Dr. Skumatz's cutting-edge work in this area is widely cited and she conducted early work on the programs for the USEPA (national and USEPA Region X) including a manual, implementation work, case studies, and counts. She conducted a detailed quantitative analysis of PAYT impacts on recycling and yard waste impacts for a consortium of clients including USEPA regions, the Steel Recycling Institute, the National Soft Drink Association, and others. As a follow-up, she conducted detailed quantitative work for USEPA and others analyzing the quantitative tonnage effects of PAYT on source reduction ultimately identifying the strong role of source reduction in PAYT's 17% reduction in disposed tonnage. She recently completed work for the USEPA (national) updating the count of communities in the United States with PAYT programs and examining the performance of PAYT in the nation's largest communities.

ATTACHMENT B – Tasks to be completed for Westminster

Analysis 1: Examine solid waste system in Selected Other Colorado Communities and Assess Baseline in City of Westminster

Activities:	Deliverables
<p>City Comparables: Interview / survey city staff and limited hauler interviews (less promising) to gather information on current solid waste systems, authorities, options used in comparable communities in Colorado. Before beginning, we will work with City of Westminster staff to identify additional topics of interest to augment the draft questionnaire assembled by Westminster staff, and to suggest possible substitutes for communities to interview. We will contact up to 7 haulers operating in Westminster and complete interviews as possible to query about what services they offer and what they may be able to do outside of what they offer currently in Westminster for residential and commercial services.</p>	<p>Spreadsheet completed to extent possible / available.</p>
<p>Set Out Survey: Use SERA staff, City volunteers (green committee) and others to conduct a set-out survey. We will gather information on trash set outs (number, size, fullness, weight) and recycling (same data), as well as whether there is obvious recycling in the trash, and comment on the recycling (all recyclables represented, illegal recyclables, etc.). We will conduct as random a survey as reasonable, given the presence of HOAs, and the presence of 7 haulers that may collect on different days. We will sample in greater amounts in non-HOA areas, and sample HOA areas separately to identify whether there is recycling in HOAs. If not, less sampling will be conducted there (for efficiency). GIS data from the City may help us with this effort. To keep the task affordable, we will sample for no more than 3 days and can adjust that figure based on City priorities. The resulting data will provide an estimate of current recycling availability, estimated recycling percent, and information useful for improving</p>	<p>Memo on baseline residential recycling rate, access to recycling, and education needs on recycling.</p>
<p>Business Recycling Survey: We will conduct a drive-by (windshield) survey of a sample within the business district in Westminster to estimate the percent of businesses for which there are recycling containers present. This will provide information on the degree to which recycling has penetrated in Westminster's business district. (Note that a percent of recycling cannot be obtained because (in a drive-by) we will not know collection frequency for trash vs. recycling, so volumes cannot be computed.) We will stop into 60 businesses to observe or ask about whether customers have access to recycling in the business.</p>	<p>Memo on approximate percent of business district businesses with recycling service.</p>
<p>Household and Business Survey – Non-Statistical: We will construct a web survey designed to gather information on the following topics: current trash set outs / frequency / size / hauling company (or color of container); whether they have recycling service, and if yes, their recycling set outs / frequency / size; main materials still in their trash bin; satisfaction with current service(s), access to and use of recycling; what they do with yard waste; trash bill levels; attitudes about recycling / green; interest in additional recycling / solid waste / diversion options; willingness to pay; characteristics of the home and occupants (including whether in an HOA) / characteristics of business (including main activities at the business, main recyclables generated, whether independent or chain and whether decisions made locally or not), and other information to be discussed with the City. We have conducted numerous similar surveys, with good response. We advertise the survey in the City's newsletter, bill insert, or similar "wide outreach" ways, and respondents are directed to a website and click on a button to take the survey. Those completing the survey are eligible for a drawing for several MP3 players or gift certificates to local businesses. The survey is not statistically representative (brings out more who care, positively or negatively, about recycling) but it does represent those who might show up at a public hearing, etc. Skip patterns address business vs. household respondents. Allows us to analyze current diversion rates, recycling / yard waste / trash practices, use of drop-offs, needs, preferences among possible recycling / system options, willingness to pay, and other information useful to crafting successful options.</p>	<p>Memo of results on current recycling use, attitudes, needs, and willingness to pay, and preferences among possible new initiatives for city in recycling.</p>
<p>Household and Business Survey –Statistical: Similar to above, but statistically significant because the survey link is sent, via postcard, to a random sample of households and businesses within the City. Requires purchasing a sample from a third party, or use of City records to send to a random sample.</p>	<p>Same as above, from a statistical sample.</p>
<p>Provide summary memo of baseline in Westminster: Develop a short executive summary of the results of these analyses to which the memos may be attached.</p>	

Analysis 2: Provide Feasible Options for Improved Residential and Commercial Recycling in Westminster

Activities:	Deliverables
<p>Gap Analysis: Analyze gaps in residential and commercial service: Using results of the "comparables" analysis, results of the survey(s), and interviews with Westminster staff, prepare a matrix assessing gaps in availability of key trash and diversion services for the major users in the City. Work with the City to identify priority gaps / opportunities.</p>	<p>Memo / matrix on priority service gaps in Westminster</p>
<p>Residential Strategies: Assess options and potential for residential sector: Using the gap analysis, review potential options and conduct a detailed analysis of 3-4 strategies that will lead to significant increases in recycling, and are feasible for Westminster. Consider ordinances, bundling, PAYT, incentives, mandates, service provision efficiencies, facilities expansion, HOA options / authority, and other options. Prepare an interim memo with preliminary candidates for discussion with City staff (and possibly advisory committee). Where possible, provide information gained from use of strategy in other locations. After discussion, revise / complete the analysis and provide information on the concept and key decisions / options for design; implementation steps and responsibilities, and general cost and diversion information / potential. Prepare a memo for use by city staff and council. Will be summarized into joint residential / commercial memo.</p>	<p>Draft memo on key options being considered (for discussion); Memo on recommended residential strategies for Westminster.</p>
<p>Commercial Strategies: Assess options and potential for commercial sector: Using the gap analysis, review potential options and conduct a detailed analysis of 3-4 strategies that will lead to significant increases in recycling, and are feasible for Westminster. Consider ordinances (mandates, space for recycling, recycling plans, lease clauses, ABC laws), service bundling, incentives, mandates, facilities expansion, and other options. Prepare an interim memo with preliminary candidates for discussion with City staff (and possibly advisory committee). Where possible, provide information gained from use of strategy in other locations. After discussion, revise / complete the analysis and provide information on the concept and key decisions / options for design; implementation steps and responsibilities, and general cost and diversion information / potential. Prepare a memo for use by city staff and council. Will be summarized into joint residential / commercial memo.</p>	<p>Draft memo on key options being considered (for discussion); Memo on recommended commercial strategies for Westminster.</p>