

Billings City Administrator Weekly Report

June 16, 2023

1. **Rec2U** - Rec2U started today (6/16/2023) in Hawthorne Park, and Highland Park. A new recreation program that is free and provides a variety of recreational activities for all ages. The kickoff was a huge success with over 50 participants at both locations. Plenty of snacks and fun were had by all. See the enclosed pics.





2. **Solid Waste Collection & Landfill Rate Memo** – The enclosed memo will be in the Council packet for the June 26 discussion.
3. **CPTED Debrief** – Our staff team who attended the CPTED (crime prevention through environmental design) met this week to establish a path forward. Volunteers in PD, Facilities and Parks agreed to lead staff teams that are focused on: short- and long-term strategy for implementation, data collection and reporting, and prioritizing public spaces. Each department will also be reviewing their facilities and spaces for impactful implementation efforts asap. Crime Prevention Sergeant Nate West will be presenting CPTED principles and answering questions during our July 17 Council Work Session.
4. **Council Sub-Committees** – Budget and Finance, Legislative and Local Affairs each had meetings this week.
5. **Gazette, US Bank Blocks** – 30+ leaders met Thursday morning with Berkshire Hathaway to discuss the redevelopment of the double block that is for sale along 27th. An incredible opportunity

exists to have a mixed-use transformational infill project that could greatly impact the economic vibrancy of downtown.

6. **New City Hall News** - This week at the new city hall project got the sprayed-on fire resistant material applied to the new iron that was installed on the 5th floor. The demo of duct work in various areas continued. We got started on the demo of one of the air handlers in the 2nd floor fan room. We also got the first delivery of some of the new duct work for the 5th floor this week. Some electrical conduit work got started in the parking garage. The air mixing box rooms that one of the air handlers in each of the fan rooms on the 4th & 5th floor was demoed this week. The interior vestibule storefront in the 1st floor lobby was removed. We started with the wall framing layout on the 5th floor at the end of this week. It was a good week at the city hall project. If there are any questions let me know. Enjoy the weekend! Thanks, Rick.







7. **Public Works** - Public Works shuts off water for non-payment of accounts with water service. This results in a very low delinquency rate which translates to a saving for all customers. However, PW has had issues for several years with sewer accounts that do not also have water. Typically, these properties receive their water service from Heights Water District and we are not legally able to have another entity shut off water service for our delinquent accounts.

To mitigate this problem, we are taking several steps:

- Staff has made multiple attempts to contact the delinquent property owners by both mail and phone. Payment arrangements have been agreed to for numerous accounts.
- We can by state statute assess the most recent year's delinquent charges on the annual tax statement. We will begin this process this year and you will see these assessments come to Council for approval in September.
- Accounts with no payment arrangement in effect and a balance of less than \$2,000 will be sent to collections for our collections vendor to attempt to collect on. The utility receives a portion of what the collection vendor is able to collect.
- Accounts with no payment arrangement in effect and a balance of more than \$2,000 will have their sewer service dug up this week and service will be terminated. We have made additional attempts at reaching these property owners last week and the beginning of this week. We also located the sewer lines last week and several property owners questioned the locator as to what he was doing and was told that the sewer line was being located to terminate service due to non-payment. The majority have made payment arrangements and as of today, we have 8 accounts with balances ranging from \$2,294 to \$7,615 that will be disconnected from sewer service on Monday.
 - To reinstate service, the property owner would need to pay the costs of disconnection, reconnection, and the delinquent charges which will be very expensive.

We wanted to provide this information to you in case you receive any phone calls from property

8. Next Week's Meetings/Task Forces

- a. West End Task Force, Tuesday, June 20th 7:00 pm, Connections Church, 56th Street West and Grand

9. From the PIO Desk:

New Billings Fire Department drone taking public safety to new heights

<https://www.billingsmt.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2490>

BPL: Billings Public Library installs first story trail

<https://www.billingsmt.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2491>

Photos: 2023 Billings Fire recruit academy graduation

<https://www.billingsmt.gov/SlideShow.aspx?AID=2&AN=2023%20Billings%20FD%20recruit%20academy%20graduation>

Video: 2023 Billings Fire recruit oath of office

<https://fb.watch/lbh8ljoJxk/>

Girl Scouts of Montana & Wyoming tackle trash at Riverfront Park for Spring Spruce event

<https://www.facebook.com/CityofBillings/posts/pfbid0E1bKQCcJBGwZPSa6NJz7Fc45HqizEVxbSSI8ZVBbrfo2chjhjZEpunn4QjPP5boQI>

City of Billings in the news

Building Division

Building under construction collapses in west Billings

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/building-under-construction-collapses-in-west-billings>

BPL

'Bring the library to our patrons': Billings Public Library launches new 'Story Trail' program

<https://www.ktvq.com/community/out-and-about/bring-the-library-to-our-patrons-billings-public-library-launches-new-story-trail-program>

Billings' new story book trail is awesome for young readers

<https://billingsmix.com/billings-new-story-book-trail-is-awesome-for-young-readers/>

Council

Billings City Council approves emergency funding for sink hole on Gabel Road

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/billings-city-council-approves-emergency-funding-for-sink-hole-on-gabel-road>

BFD & BPD

Billings police and fire test out new drone

https://www.kulr8.com/news/billings-police-and-fire-department-test-out-their-new-drones/article_8a8a2000-0652-11ee-b7f8-1fb9049fafa1.html

In other news....

Construction on Laurel power station will continue while appeals head to Supreme Court

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/construction-on-laurel-power-station-will-continue-while-appeals-head-to-supreme-court>



MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 15, 2023
TO: Mayor and Council
SUBJECT: Solid Waste Residential Collection Program

Public Works staff presented a plan to the City Council at a work session on May 15. During that meeting, we heard concerns about the plan for a few different reasons. Due to that, we included a resolution for consideration at the City Council June 12, 2023, meeting that proposed staying with the Solid Waste collection program we have had for many years and just adjusting the rates for inflation. Before the meeting, we had a couple of requests for further clarification on the program we presented. In addition to the information requests, the City Council meeting on June 12 was very full. Staff proposed delaying the public hearing and adoption of rates so we could address the requests for information. During the discussion about delaying the item, City Council asked that staff send information in an email about the Solid Waste program that was being recommended as well as the option that had been presented previously.

Work Session Rate Structure Options

Staff presented two options at the work session, one to continue as we are currently doing and the other is a more service-based cost model.

BMCC 21-227 states: Each property from which refuse is produced or collected shall, as far as practicable, bear its share of the expense of collecting and/or disposing of the refuse in proportion to the amount of refuse collected and/or disposal of and the frequency of collection.

This City Code section states that the city will match rates to service as much as possible. Our current program does not do that. A person who disposes of one bag per week pays the same as a person who fills a black container, green container, and monthly extras. If it is decided that we should retain our current system, we will need to modify this section of City Code.

Recommended Solid Waste Collection Structure

The rates for the program that City Staff recommended at the May 15, 2023, meeting are:

96 gallon black container	\$13.90
64 gallon black container	\$9.90
Additional 96 gallon black container	\$4.50
Green container (included with basic service)	\$0
Additional green container	\$4.50
Bulky	Fee per item (call in)
Cardboard recycle	Subsidized



The goal of the program is to provide a similar curbside experience as we do now but through more sustainable methods. Each property would decide if they wanted a 96 gallon container or a smaller 64 gallon container – whichever matched their disposal needs most closely. With this base service fee, they would also receive a yard waste (green) container that would be collected weekly and the ability to dispose of their cardboard at curbside one time per month. Customers would have an option to add an additional black container and/or green container for a small fee. The fee for the additional containers is relatively low to encourage the use of them. Customers could also contact the City for a scheduled pick up of any additional material that would be collected curbside for a fee. After analyzing the waste characteristics of the residential properties, if the City collected cardboard curbside for free, almost all customers would be able to use one black container for garbage collection by diverting their cardboard and freeing up space in the container. If a customer could not consistently do that, we would encourage them to utilize a second black container for the minimal fee which is consistent with the existing City Code.

BMCC 21-207 states: Residential properties. There shall be sufficient number of receptacles to adequately hold the accumulation of garbage refuse for a period of seven (7) days.

The program that was recommended would provide a similar curbside experience, conform to the City Code regarding proportional cost of service, reduce worker injuries from extra collection, and be a first step toward a recycling program.

City Council Feedback

1. No subsidy from landfill for collection. When we presented to City Council last year regarding our approach to a new structure, we brought up the current practice of subsidizing collection with revenue from the landfill. The majority of the feedback we received was that the preference was to set collection rates appropriate for the cost of service and not subsidize collection. This feedback is why the rate for FY24 is significantly higher than FY23 if we continue with the same program framework. Previously, the subsidy was 20% of the rate, resulting in a rate of \$13.44 if Council desires to continue the subsidy. Council could also choose to subsidize at a lower rate, such as 10 or 15%, to begin transitioning into full cost of services rates. Staff proposed continuing the subsidy for cardboard collection as it benefits the landfill by diverting a significant amount of material. Cardboard is estimated to make up approximately 15% of the waste stream at the landfill so it is a considerable amount of diversion.
2. Cost for additional container not high enough. We want to encourage the use of containers as it is an automatic operation versus manual. The efficiency is much higher when we can use a sideload truck and automatically collect the container with one person versus a rear load with two people who have to manually collect the refuse.
3. Concerns about extra service ending. The reason City staff proposed curbside cardboard collection is that we believe the need for extra collection will drop to a very low amount. A significant amount of the current extra collection is cardboard which does not technically meet the city code if it is not in a container or bag. If we recycled cardboard however, we would be collecting a majority of what is currently set out as extras. Most of the existing material set out for extra collection beyond cardboard does



not meet the City Code for extra collection. This additional material would not be collected if we enforce the existing code which was a discussion during the work

session. The City Code is below for what is acceptable and if we stop collecting anything that does not fit within these parameters, it will dramatically reduce the number of extras we collect. We believe a better option than just ending inappropriate extras is to offer a cardboard recycle solution in addition to a “for cost, scheduled” extra collection that not only meets the needs of the vast majority of people, but also provides the benefit of waste diversion from the landfill.

BMCC 21-209 states: Plastic containers, receptacles, bags or sacks designed for the accumulating, storage and handling of refuse are also acceptable and will be picked up per approved published schedule or frequency.

4. **Desire full recycle program:** If this is a goal of City Council, we can develop a program to meet the goal. However, the reason we did not propose it is that it is cost prohibitive to do all at one time. We would need to purchase new containers and trucks to go to a single stream curbside recycling program. In addition, the cost to separate and ship the materials would be very high in contrast to the revenue it would generate given the lack of market. Our estimates to phase in a full curbside, single waste stream recycle program are as follows:

	Implementation In 5 Years	Implementation In 10 Years
One-time costs	\$4,220,175	\$5,057,328
On-going annual costs	\$2,128,000*	\$2,128,000*
Annual rate Increase needed	8.7% + inflationary rate increases needed	4.9% + inflationary rate increases needed

*Dependent on market rate

We could partner with local recyclers and try to resurrect some of the drop-off sites that have been discontinued until we can develop and fund a full program if it is desired by City Council. There were challenges with these in the past so those issues would need to be addressed. The issues were significant enough that it may require manned recycle stations which would be costly.

5. **Desire a smaller container option:** Without discontinuing free extra collection, it is not feasible to offer a smaller, less expensive option. The result of doing so could potentially mean less revenue and a higher extra volume which would raise expenses. The long-term outcome would be increased cost to everyone.



6. Public engagement: This is a difficult balance – we do not roll programs out to the community until we know that it is the direction City Council wants to proceed. We have talked with many community groups to get the feel for the community's preference and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive towards a curbside cardboard recycling program. To make a change like this will require extensive, but short-term outreach. If we start the outreach too soon, there can be more concern the longer it is until it is implemented. We saw this with the 300 to 96 conversion. We had many calls of concern from the property owners about not having enough room in the containers, other people using their containers, people disposing of refuse randomly, and other concerns. After the conversion, we received few additional calls because people found that the 96-gallon containers were adequate and they were able to control the use of them. We have also not seen an uptick in garbage being dumped outside of containers. We have a contract with Lee Enterprises and will develop a robust outreach program that will be extensive, but will only span a few weeks.
7. Leaves, trees and general refuse: We would plan occasional special city collection events. Most cities do two or three per year to collect leaves and general full city cleanup. We would anticipate continuing the leaf collection program that we had this year and likely expand that to include more areas given the popularity of the program. We would also anticipate continuing the Christmas tree collection sites.

Collection Program Options

The City Council can choose one of two options at this time – either stay with the existing program or move to the recommended program. Any option in between will take longer to implement. If it is decided that City Council wants to stay with the existing program but just charge for extras, we would need time to develop a pay option for the extras. If we are not collecting cardboard but we are charging for extras, we anticipate the demand would drop but not enough to do it on an on-call, scheduled basis so we would need to continue driving full routes monthly. Our current software does not allow charges to be made in the field so the only viable option would be a “bag and tag” system where customers purchase bags or tags at local stores and our collection staff would only collect items that were properly bagged and tagged. This would take time to set up. Within the next year, we will be changing the software and will have an option to do a fee if there are items to collect at each residence, but we cannot do that currently. As of today, keeping the current system but implementing a charge for extras is not recommended.



	FY23	FY24 – No Program Change	FY24 - Recommended Program
96 gallon black container	\$12.45	\$16.80	\$13.90
64 gallon black container	n/a	n/a	\$9.90
Additional 96 gal black container	\$4.15	\$4.50	\$4.50
Green container	\$0	\$0	\$0
Additional green container	\$0	\$4.50	\$4.50
Extras 1x per month	\$0	\$0	Fee per item (call in)
Cardboard recycle	n/a	n/a	Subsidized

Solid Waste Collection changes

Regardless of the program that is chosen, we will be implementing a route efficiency change this summer or fall. Previously, we had not done a full route modification and have instead just added areas as they came into the city. By doing a full-scale route optimization, we will save significant resources and provide better service to the customers. This program will result in nearly 85% of customers collection days being changed. Depending on the decision by City Council, either extra or cardboard recycle collection will be moved to be on the same day as the black container collection. Regardless of the program selected, city staff will also educate the public on extras that meet the city code and discontinue the collection of items that do not meet the code.

The June 26, 2023 meeting is also quite full so staff is happy to address as many concerns and provide as much information before the meeting as is possible to ensure the City Council has all of the information it needs to be able to discuss the issue effectively at the meeting.