

Council readies bid documents for citywide trash collection

Residents would be required to use single-hauler service

By Jeanne Davant

Manitou Springs residents could see a citywide waste collection and recycling service go into effect by May 1.

City Council members reviewed a request for bids document and contract to hire a single waste collection contractor Tuesday night and will give a formal blessing to the documents at its next regular meeting Jan. 19.

The new program would provide trash collection and recycling for all single-family residences and multi-family dwellings of seven units or less. All residents will be required to participate, but three service levels will be provided, depending on the amount of trash a household generates. The contractor would also serve city parks and facilities.

"We're going to try to make it reasonable for everyone," said Teri Christman, who has spearheaded the development of the program. "I believe once everyone has curbside recycling, they're going to love it."

There will be a "minimal service level" for residents who don't generate much trash, she said. Residents will be able to place all materials for recycling, including aluminum and tin cans, plastics numbered 1 through 7, paper, cardboard and glass, in a single bin.

The contractor hired to perform the collections will provide bins and bill customers, Christman said. Bills will include a \$2-a-month franchise fee that will be returned to the city to cover its administrative costs.

As a last resort, the city could terminate water service to residences with delinquent waste collection accounts.

Residents whose dwellings will be unoccupied for a minimum of 30 days will be able to have their service stopped while the premises are vacant, and their accounts will be exempt from collection charges. They must continue to pay the \$2-a-month franchise fee, however.

Although provisions for extra services such as collection of leaves and bulky items are not specifically included in the bid and contract documents, the city would work with the contractor to provide options for customers at additional charges.

"The company will be responsible for customer service," Christman said. "But if there are continued problems, (customers) can come to us. We've built in a lot of provisions so if there are problems, we can deal with them, but we're not expecting that." She said she will ask prospective contractors to provide a 10 percent discount for potential customers not covered by the contract.

The contractor will be responsible for collecting fees, but the city eventually aims to take on billing, Finance Director Mike Leslie said.

"We're looking at eventually building the capability of redoing our software in the utility department, plus bringing on an employee to administer billing," Leslie said. The franchise fee, which amounts to \$48,000 a year, "would build us up to that level."

Christman said the feedback she has heard about the service has been positive, but Mayor Marc Snyder said he expected more questions would arise as the start date approaches.

Through the single-hauler service, the city is seeking to cut down on the amount of heavy vehicle traffic from multiple trash haulers and to decrease carbon emissions.

Christman said it was difficult to calculate how much wear and tear current trash haulers cause, but they account for 312,000 trips annually on city streets. Figures on the estimated reduction of the city's carbon footprint by changing to a single hauler will be available at the Climate Action Fair on Jan. 23 at City Hall.

Residents can weigh in on the proposed service at the next Council meeting, and there will be two public meetings before the start of the collection service.

Bidding for the waste collection service will start Jan. 26, and a mandatory pre-bid meeting will be held at 10 a.m. Bids will be opened March 3.

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