



County of Los Alamos

Los Alamos, NM 87544
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Council Meeting Staff Report

August 9, 2022

Agenda No.: A.

Indexes (Council Goals):

Presenters: Angelica Gurule; Juan Rael

Legislative File: 15923-22

Title

Follow-Up Discussion of Food Waste Composting Feasibility Study and Discussion of Environmental Services Fees

Body

The **Food Waste Composting** Feasibility report is the culmination of many years and hours of staff, consultants and volunteer time researching and exploring food waste composting and providing food waste prevention education to decrease waste sent to the landfill. Food waste composting provides a viable solution to manage excess yard trimmings, a similar program that was started and is very popular with the community. Food composting could provide the next step towards reducing our environmental impact by avoiding greenhouse gas emissions and decreasing waste sent to landfill. The compost produced from the operation will enrich our soil and generate revenues to offset a portion of the operation and maintenance expenses.

At the May 17, 2022, County Council Work Session, Environmental Services manager and our consultant (SCS Engineers), presented the findings of the Food Composting Feasibility Study. The feasibility study evaluated five (5) food composting technology options: Anaerobic digestion, in vessel, covered aerated static piles, aerated static piles, and windrow composting. The report also analyzed four (4) locations, Bayo Canyon, Overlook Park (2 locations), and Eco Station. Additionally, the study reviewed collection options including curbside collection and drop off sites. The report concluded with a recommendation of windrow composting technology, located at Bayo Canyon and providing drop off sites for residents and curbside collection for businesses. The Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB) recommendation to implement food waste composting using the windrow system at Bayo Canyon and provide drop off sites for residents and curbside collection for businesses. At this meeting, Council had many questions and requested more information regarding the economic and environmental impacts of landfilling vs. composting organic materials, as well regional partnership opportunities and grant opportunities. The purpose of this presentation (Attachment A) is to provide responses to the questions that were raised by Council. A complete list of questions raised during that Council meeting and answers to those questions are compiled in Attachment B.

Overview of ES Rates

The Environmental Services Division operates as an Enterprise Fund, meaning the rates collected should cover operating expenses to provide service. Environmental Services offers waste collection services, enhanced recycling services, household hazardous waste, and bear resistant containers. Rates are collected via monthly residential and commercial billing in addition to rates collected at the Eco Station. The revenue from the rates are used to cover the costs of all services. The new program of bear carts, both residential and commercial dumpsters, has recently been added. The expense of replacement costs of these bear carts and dumpsters must now be added into operational costs.

As a result of increasing expenses, the current rates are not covering the cost to provide services. Environmental Services rates were last adjusted in FY2018. This item will give staff an opportunity to discuss how revenues from rates compare with operational costs and recommendations for rate adjustments (Attachment C).

Attachments

A - Food Waste Composting Feasibility Study Follow Up Presentation

B - Food Waste Composting Feasibility Study - Q&A

C - Environmental Services Fees Presentation