

## **ESB Chair Hampton and ESB Liaison Angelica Gurule**

Expanding recycling services to include plastic wraps, bags, food-grade plastics and other miscellaneous items as part of the County's zero waste efforts should be evaluated to better understand the environmental, financial, and community impacts. Additional information would be helpful to quantify the program's environmental benefits, including anticipated waste diversion, greenhouse gas reductions, and how the program compares to other waste reduction strategies.

Financial impacts, particularly the potential effect on solid waste rates, warrant further evaluation. Existing recycling services are funded through the monthly solid waste fee, and it is currently unclear whether an expanded program would be incorporated into that fee or funded through a separate mechanism. Although the cost for expanding recycling services is unknown until the services are procured in compliance with our procurement code, the estimated cost based on the presentation to the ESB by one potential business is approximately \$9–\$12 per household per month. If these costs were recovered through the existing solid waste rate structure, the current monthly rate of \$34 per household could increase by approximately 26% to 35%. It is also unclear whether a municipal partnership would result in discounted pricing or whether alternative funding sources, such as subsidies from grants or voluntary participation, could offset program costs. Clarifying the funding approach, potential rate impacts, long-term financial sustainability, and the overall cost-effectiveness of the program would help inform future decision-making.

Additional information regarding anticipated community participation and willingness to pay would also be beneficial, as program success may depend on achieving sufficient participation rates. Evaluating the expected amount of material diverted from the landfill relative to program costs would provide a clearer understanding of the program's overall value.

Finally, it may be beneficial to evaluate this program alongside other prioritized waste reduction initiatives to determine where it fits within the County's overall zero waste strategy and whether it represents the most effective use of available resources. For example, the County is currently developing a food composting program that is expected to significantly reduce organic waste sent to the landfill by an estimated 4,500 tons annually or 17% of the total waste stream, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and has received strong community support. Evaluating the relative environmental benefits, costs, and community impacts of these initiatives may help prioritize future investments and maximize progress toward the County's zero waste goals.

## **ESB Member Comments from May 21, 2026 ESB Meeting**

- Board members raised several questions about program costs, including why Ridwell's pricing differs from other providers (such as Terracycle), whether the service is available through a State Price Agreement, and whether costs could be reduced through alternative funding models, such as a subscription-based program.
- Members emphasized the importance of conducting a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis to evaluate both the financial and environmental value of the program.
- ESB members discussed whether the program could be expanded to the community level.
- Questions were asked about environmental performance and reporting, including whether Ridwell performs life-cycle assessments (greenhouse gas emissions, water, and energy use) and whether the program can quantify diverted materials to help measure progress toward the County's zero-waste goals.
- ESB members noted that the program could complement the County's existing recycling program by collecting materials that are not currently accepted, potentially reducing recycling contamination and increasing diversion from the landfill.
- Members also discussed the potential for community drop-off locations or centralized material collection to expand program offerings, participation and reduce transportation costs, while recognizing that use of the Eco Station for this purpose may be constrained by permitting requirements.
- Additional questions included whether Ridwell accepts specific materials, such as baling twine.