

November 2008 Derby Horizon

Curbside Recycling & Enhanced Trash Service Planned By City Manager Kathy Sexton

Although details have yet to be worked out, the City is on track to ensure that curbside recycling and enhanced trash pick-up services are offered in Derby beginning around April 2009. Trash and recycling services will still be provided by the private sector. What will change is that the City will follow the lead of most cities in the U.S. and issue a franchise to a private provider to ensure prices are fair and consistent and that quality standards are maintained.

Background

As the governing authority over solid waste, the Board of Sedgwick County Commissioners decided this past summer that all the cities in the County should issue a trash franchise and offer curbside recycling. The trash franchise should include an option for at least two sizes of trash carts, with the smaller one offered at a lower cost.

Such a “volume-based” or “pay-as-you-throw” system is used in many communities across the country to ensure that those who produce the most garbage, pay the most. Conversely, those who produce little – either because they have fewer people in their household or they recycle more or they just don’t produce much garbage – pay less.

Curbside Recycling

The County also has a dismally low rate of recycling, which can be greatly improved by offering curbside pickup at no extra cost.

Of course, the decision to put recyclables out at the curb every other week is a decision to be made by each household. Nobody will mandate recycling, only provide a system that encourages it by making it easy and affordable.

Recycling is not a feel-good activity. It saves space in the landfill and conserves precious resources. Administered correctly, it’s good public policy and it’s good business.

Trash Franchise

Currently, trash bills paid by Derby homeowners vary widely because the industry is completely unregulated. I have heard of people paying \$65 per quarter (3 months), even though many homeowner associations have struck deals with trash companies for rates more around the \$45 range.

Such variation in rates is testament to the efficiency to be gained from authorizing only one truck to serve any given street on only one day of the week. The driver picks up more trash per hour than in the current system of driving all over town to serve only certain households, skipping those served by other companies.

Obviously, such reduced truck traffic will also be good for street maintenance, noise and air pollution, and general tidiness of neighborhoods (all trash carts at the curb on one day rather than some on each of several days of the week).

The City Council appointed six community volunteers to a new Recycling/Trash Advisory Board, and the board has met several times this fall to discuss the particulars of how such a new system would work. More about the plan for going forward will be presented to the City Council at its regular council meeting on Tuesday, November 25 at 6:30 p.m.