



City Council Report

Date: November 18, 2019
To: City Council
Through: John Pombier, Assistant City Manager
From: Scott Bouchie, Environmental Management and Sustainability Director
Sandy Stechnij, Solid Waste Business and Programs Administrator
Niel Curley, Special Projects Manager
Subject: Citywide Recycling Code Changes

Purpose and Recommendation

The Environmental Management and Sustainability Department is requesting changes to City Code to allow the removal of contaminated recycle barrels after one violation where prohibited waste is disposed of in the recycle barrel. Prohibited waste includes:

1. Animal waste
2. Human waste
3. Dangerous or hazardous waste
4. Food waste
5. Green waste
6. Construction debris or inert material

The Environmental Management and Sustainability Department is also requesting an update to acceptable recyclable materials to include:

1. Empty, clean, and dry beverage bottles, jugs, and cans made from plastic, glass, steel or aluminum;
2. Empty, clean, and dry metal food cans;
3. Corrugated cardboard;
4. Mixed paper including office paper, newspaper, mail, and magazines.

Background and Discussion

The City of Mesa has experienced rising recyclable processing costs driven by changes in recycling contracts and the decline in the commodity market. Per the discussion at the September 12, 2019 City Council Study Session, staff has

developed code changes that rebrand what materials are acceptable in the recycle barrel and will allow for increased enforcement for prohibited items.

Changes to the acceptable recyclable material are needed to support the recent rebranding of the recycling program. The rebranding effort will simplify what is allowed in the recycle barrel to reduce contamination and eliminate unnecessary processing fees for materials that have a limited market.

In addition to program rebranding, the Environmental Management and Sustainability Department is requesting a code change to differentiate between minor and major contamination. Major contamination is defined as a prohibited waste and includes:

1. Animal waste
2. Human waste
3. Dangerous or hazardous waste
4. Food waste
5. Green waste
6. Construction debris or inert material

Minor contamination is defined as any non-accepted material other than prohibited wastes.

Contamination is identified through random recycle barrel inspections to ensure program compliance. Recent recycle barrel inspections have indicated an increased use of the recycle barrel for the purposes of solid waste disposal.

Current code requires that the City provide customers with two contamination notifications prior to barrel removal. Existing enforcement will be maintained for recycle barrels with minor contamination. The proposed code changes would identify materials classified as prohibited waste that would result in the immediate removal of a recycle barrel.

Customers that have had their barrel removed due to minor or major contamination will be suspended from the program for three months. After three months customers have the ability to re-enter the program upon payment of the associated barrel delivery fee.

Alternatives

Council may elect to not adopt the proposed changes, in which case program enforcement would continue with two notifications prior to barrel removal. There would be no differentiation of enforcement between minor and major contamination.

Fiscal Impact

Recycling vendors charge the City a processing fee based on weight of delivered material; it is anticipated that recycling processing fees may decrease if heavier solid waste is removed from the recycle material stream. Changes to acceptable materials may improve the quality of the City's recyclable stream, which may yield financial program benefits.

Coordinated With

Code changes were coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.