



Fort Collins

Air Quality Advisory Board

AIR QUALITY BOARD RESOLUTION TO CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Fort Collins Air Quality Advisory Board
DATE: May 29, 2007
SUBJECT: Board Recommendation to establish a City Trash Collection Utility

Dear Mayor and members of City Council:

At our meeting of May 22, the Fort Collins Air Quality Board passed a unanimous resolution to City Council:

“The AQAB recommends that City Council develop and adopt an implementation plan for a City of Fort Collins public trash collection utility.”

The AQAB recognizes that the establishment of a utility constitutes a substantial undertaking for the City. We also understand that the establishment of a new utility will involve a change in our charter, and thus require a public vote.

Nonetheless, the Board believes that the one-time challenges will be more than compensated for by solving this intransigent problem once and for all. The Board is convinced that absent action, this longtime problem will not only continue, but will grow worse as it negatively impacts safety, noise, costs to residents and streets, congestion, and air quality.

Review

The Board has had recent presentations by two citizen groups advocating districting. We also reviewed the most thorough study to date, the 1998 HF & H “Trash Districting Feasibility Analysis.” Some conclusions of this study were as follows:

- Districting would reduce truck traffic on city streets, resulting in less congestion, less noise and air pollution, and less street maintenance costs. Street cost savings alone is roughly \$322,000 per year.
- The report’s extensive public opinion survey shows a majority of Fort Collins residents can be expected to support districting.
- The report’s economic analysis showed cost savings to residents at as much as \$500,000 per year.



Discussion

Before its motion, the Board examined three courses of action.

1. Do nothing/market correction.

Historical experience over two decades has not shown evidence of market consolidation or reformulation that would result in a significant reduction in trash truck trips. One presenter to our Board, Mary Smith, observed the following:

"I live on a street that's two blocks long and has 27 houses on it and is 2/10 of a mile long. I have four trash haulers on my street and four recycling trucks on my street. Three days a week there are trash haulers and recyclers on my street. One day there are four trucks; the other two days there are just two. Three days of the week there are trashcans sitting out on the street. These are the heaviest vehicles on our street, with the exception of an occasional moving van, that comes through every week. Somehow, it seems to us, that eight trucks to pick up 27 houses, there has to be waste somewhere...I've been here for 27 years and when I first moved here there was districting."

2. Trash Districting.

Recommended in the 1998 HF & F study. The Board believes that districting would solve the problems associated with our excessive truck trips.

One change in districting would be that residents could no longer select their hauler. In reality, this may not pose a major concern. HF & F's survey showed residents were more concerned about container selection (46.8%) than keeping their current hauler (45.8%).

The greatest challenge to the Board concerning districting was devising an equitable way to partition districts among existing haulers, as well as what to do about possible future haulers or market consolidation. The Board was unable to formulate solutions to these problems.

3. City Utility.

This solution, recommended by the Board, would solve the problems associated with our current excessive truck trips, as well as avoid the problems associated with creating districts and accommodating market changes. Loveland has run its own collection utility since 1989.

As mentioned, establishing a city utility will require an election. It will also require bonding if the City was interested in owning the necessary equipment. A possible alternative approach would be to subcontract some or all of the work involved. Employees of haulers could either continue in their jobs via subcontracting, or alternately, work for the City.

Thank you for your consideration of this resolution. I would be happy to answer any questions or convey your comments and further direction to the Board.

Sincerely,

Eric Levine,
Board Chair