

Staff Report

YARD WASTE SERVICES

August 14, 2012

This report provides a brief history of how yard waste is handled for the City of Ames and Story County, as well as options for potential changes in the City's new contract for yard waste drop-off

BACKGROUND

Since January 1, 1991, the burial of yard waste in sanitary landfills has been prohibited in Iowa. As a part of the City of Ames Solid Waste Permit, we are required to have a yard waste management plan. As the City's first effort to manage yard waste in the spring of 1991, the City opened a yard waste drop-off site on South Riverside at the southwest corner of the airport property.

After operating this site for four years, the site was closed for a variety of reasons. One was the habitual violation of unauthorized dumping of debris and materials other than yard waste outside of posted hours. The amount of paper and plastic that was beginning to litter the airport area was also causing concerns to the operation of the airport. The availability and constraints of a different site was also a hurdle in seeking to relocate the operation. Lastly, it was recognized that the City's cost of labor to staff this function was significantly higher than the private sector's, resulting in higher cost to our citizens.

At that point the City entered into a contract with a private entity to provide yard waste drop-off service. This contract has been awarded through a bid process. Each contract lasts one year with the possibility of extensions. Since 1995 the contracts have included hosting several "free days" each year that allow yard waste drop off at no charge to citizens.

In the most recent contract, these five free days have consisted of one Saturday in April and the first Saturday in November (for brush, grass, and leaves at \$6,000 per event), and the last three Saturdays in November (for grass, leaves, and garden waste at \$3,000 per event). Standard hours of operation through the contract are April 1 through October 14 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM and Saturday 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM for a total of 19 hours per week; and October 15 through December 15 for the same hours during the week as previously stated and on Saturday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM for a total of 23 hours per week.

For this provision of the contract, the City is billed a general fee of \$1.11/month. The contractor charges the customers a tipping fee for anyone utilizing the site for yard waste collected outside of these free days. The contractor has also been required to do specific advertising for each of the free days, and the collection site must be located in or within two miles of the city limits. **The current contract period runs from April 1st through December 15th. Therefore, staff would like to complete the next**

solicitation process by October 2012, so that whoever is awarded the contract has adequate time to prepare for the next season beginning on April 1, 2013.

It should also be noted that, as a part of the local Ames approach cited above, local private waste haulers also pick up and dispose of yard waste from their customers for a fee. Hence, the major portion of yard waste generated in our community throughout the year is handled by residents disposing of their yard waste themselves or by working directly with the private sector. The City's involvement in this process largely stemmed from a desire to help facilitate the disposal of residents' large quantities of leaves in the autumn, as well as to facilitate a community-wide clean-up in the spring.

Finally, it is important to note that the Ames Municipal Code prohibits the outdoor burning of leaves and other "landscape waste".

HOW DO OTHER COMMUNITIES HANDLE YARD WASTE?

Since all Iowa cities are prohibited from land-filling yard waste, a variety of different approaches have been developed to facilitate the disposal of yard waste. Several examples are provided below.

In **Des Moines**, yard waste can be picked up curbside using a \$1.55/preprinted bag, or stickers costing \$1.15/sticker can be used for bundled brush or with a generic bag. Brush bundles can be no larger than 18" in diameter and no more than four feet in length. Bundles cannot weigh more than 40 pounds and must have a City sticker attached. There is also a premium yard waste program where customers can utilize a 64 gallon cart at \$8.34/month/cart or a 96 gallon cart at \$10.42/month/cart. The program is partially paid through fees charged and is also subsidized with solid waste fees. Four full-time and part-time crews are used to collect the yard waste curbside. After storm events the City of Des Moines petitions Metro Waste Authority to stay open longer hours for more collections and for citizens to drop off tree damage for free.

Ankeny offers one Saturday and Sunday in May, along with one day in June and one day in October, for tree and branch drop-off only. In addition, leaves are accepted continually over a four week period starting in late October. The leaf drop off site is open 24 hours a day during that period with city crews also at the site on Saturdays and Sundays during those four weeks. The City also does one free cleanup day a year. The city incurred a cost of \$31,642 for these days in 2011. Through the city's recycling arrangement with Waste Management, \$2.95 a month is charged for recycling and \$.50 of that pays for leaves, tree and branch drop-off and the one day cleanup program.

Iowa City sells a special paper yard waste bag that is used for grass, leaves, and garden residue. These bags are priced at \$1.00/bag. A city crew of two full-time and two part-time employees using two trucks picks up filled bags along with woody yard waste of 18" in diameter and four foot in length. Their citizens also have the option of buying a sticker for \$20.00 that they can put on a 35 gallon container and have that dumped weekly. This collection program is run by the city at a net cost of \$265,079 per year, and is partially funded through refuse collection fees. Processing of the yard waste is handled separately at the Iowa City landfill.

Waterloo residents can enroll in a yard waste program using a 96 gallon yard waste bin that is collected the same day as their regular garbage. This is offered during a 16 week period at a cost of \$36.00/year. For an additional \$37.20/year, a resident can have an extra eight weeks of service. There is also a site for citizens to drop off tree and brush for free. Last year this site handled 20,000 tons and cost the City \$236,000 to process those tons. The yard waste program is managed by the city and is subsidized by fees collected through the solid waste service.

COMMENTS FROM THOSE IMPACTED BY THIS SERVICE

Comments received from Ames citizens indicate that they appreciate our “free days”, but that there are sometimes wait times before they can drop off their yard waste. Some would like to see more free days or make it free all year long.

Comments from the City’s contracted yard waste disposal business are that they would like to see equal monthly payment during the contract to allow for consistent cash flow and business planning. In addition, they emphasized that they do not have expertise or staff to write professional ads for the free days as is currently required in the contract. Finally, when the City of Ames opens up a free site for citizens to drop off branches after a severe storm, it negatively impacts their business.

POLICY ISSUES FOR CITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

a) Who Operates the Yard Waste Drop-off Facility?

- 1- Private business – The City of Ames could continue to contract with a private business to receive and handle yard waste for Story County residents. The current contract has an annual cost of \$21,010.
- 2- City of Ames – The City of Ames could run a nine month yard waste and tree and brush program with City of Ames equipment and employees at a City of Ames site. This would require additional full-time staff of two employees, processing equipment, and a location to perform the service. Minimum startup expense for equipment and employees not including property or grinding equipment would exceed \$250,000. The City would need to purchase a grinder or hire a contractor to process brush logs and trees. If composting of leaves was going to be done, additional land and equipment would be required along with permits for the composting facility. Alternately, the City could incur additional expense for transporting and drop-off of the yard waste at another site.

b) What is the Appropriate Length of Agreement?

- 1- Modify to a three year contract with the option for two individual renewable years and a non-appropriation clause. The three year base period could allow the contractor to develop a more predictable business plan.
- 2- Keep the current format of a single year contract with four individual renewable years.

c) What are the Minimum Site Hours (For Non-Free Days)?

- 1- The site would be in operation from April 1 through December 15 each contract year. Maintain a minimum of 19 hours per week of the site being open over a four day period each week during the spring and summer and 23 hours per week during the fall. (Same as in current contract.)
- 2- Modify the hours of operation available for citizen drop-off to be either more or less than the 23 hours per week currently required in the contract.

d) How Many Free Days?

- 1- Continue with the same number of free days with three free days for grass, leaves, and garden waste in the fall; and two free days for grass, leaves, and brush – one in the spring and one in the fall. (Same as in current contract.)
- 2- Identify other specific free days in addition to the ones noted above.
- 3- Establish a particular period where all days within that timeframe are free to Story County residents.
- 4- Make all days of operation from April 1 through December 15 free to Story County residents.
- 5- Eliminate free days and require yard waste customers to pay a per use fee.

e) Who is Responsible to Advertise for Free Days?

- 1- The City of Ames can do all of the advertising needed to inform the citizens of the free days, rather than requiring the contractor to provide the advertising. This would allow the message to be consistent and uniform with other City of Ames communications. This approach would also result in a cost savings over contractor based advertising.
- 2- Continue to require the contractor to arrange for free day advertising.

f) What Site Should be Designated for Storm Damaged Tree Debris?

Depending on the severity of the storm, the City has established a free drop off site at the Parks Maintenance Facility for citizens to take storm related tree debris. Depending on the severity of the storm, the expense to the City for operating this site can range from \$700 to \$1500 per day. The current yard waste contractor feels this policy takes away valuable customers.

You will recall that there are three levels of response from the Storm Damage Tree Cleanup Policy.

- A. Full collection city wide – 50% damage in four of the seven districts provides for full city wide collection by city crews and providing an area for free citizen drop off
 - B. Full collection limited area - 50% damage in a limited area and provides for full collection by city crews in that limited area
 - C. Intermediate City response – 25% damage in at least one district providing an area for free citizen drop off
- 1- Have the contractor be the designated site to handle tree debris from an Intermediate City Response level (“C”) of damage when the City institutes the Storm Damage Tree Cleanup Policy. The bidder would submit a proposed fee with the original bid that would be invoiced to the City for each day that is declared for free drop off. The drop off site would be open from 7:00 AM through 7:00 PM each day during the free drop off, and the bidder would handle the processing of the collected material. The City would maintain responsibility for the full collection city wide (“A”) and full collection limited area (“B”) levels.
 - 2- Continue with current operations utilizing City staff, Parks Maintenance Facility and hire a contractor to grind debris as required.

g) How Do We Pay For Free Days?

- 1- Continue to fund this activity through the Resource Recovery Fund. Because we manage the waste for all members of the county-wide system, and because county residents are eligible to utilize these free days, this would continue to provide the most equitable distribution of costs to the members across Story County.
- 2- Identify additional funding sources, such as from the City’s Local Option Sales Tax Fund or the General Fund. As noted above, this could shift a disproportionate share of the expenses to the City of Ames.

STAFF COMMENTS

The first option under each of the policy issues reflected above is staff’s preferred course of action. However, Council may wish to direct staff to incorporate different provisions into the Request for Proposals being prepared for yard waste disposal effective next year.



Yard Waste Services



Public Works – Resource Recovery

Background

- Since January 1, 1991 burial of yard waste at a sanitary landfill has been prohibited in Iowa. With the City of Ames Solid Waste Permit, we are required to have a yard waste management plan. The City of Ames has contracted with a private business to handle the yard waste generated in our service area.
- The current contract period runs from April 1st through December 15th. Therefore, the staff would like to complete the solicitation process by October 2012.



Highlights of Current Contract

- ❑ Five free days that allow drop off at no charge to the citizens. These five free days have consisted of one Saturday in April, the first Saturday in November, for brush, grass, and leaves at \$6,000/event, and the last three Saturdays in November for grass, leaves, and garden waste at \$3,000/event.
- ❑ Hours of operation are April 1 through October 14, 19 hours per week, M, W, F 12:00 PM–5:00 PM and Saturday 8:00 AM–12:00 PM, October 15 through December 15 same hours during the week and Saturday 8:00 AM–4:00 PM.
- ❑ Required to do specific advertising for each of the free days.
- ❑ The collection site will be located in or within two miles of the city limits.



Discussion Item 1

Who Operates the Yard Waste Facility?

1. Private business – The City of Ames could continue to contract with a private business to receive and handle yard waste for Story County residents. The current contract has an annual cost of \$21,009.99.
2. City of Ames – The City of Ames could run a nine month yard waste and tree and brush program with City of Ames equipment and employees at a City of Ames site.



Discussion Item 2

What is the Appropriate Length of Agreement?

1. Change to a three year contract with the option for two individual renewable years and a non-appropriation clause. The three year period could allow the contractor to develop a more predictable business plan.
2. Keep the current format of a single year contract with four individual renewable years.



Discussion Item 3

What are the *Minimum Site Hours (For Non-Free Days)*?

1. The site would be in operation from April 1 through December 15 each contract year. Maintain a minimum of 19 hours per week of the site being open over a four day period each week during the spring and summer and 23 hours per week during the fall. (Same as in current contract)
2. Specify an expansion to time period or minimum hours of basic operation available for citizen drop-off.

Discussion Item 4

How Many Free Days?

1. Continue with the same number of free days with one Saturday in April, the first Saturday in November, for brush, grass, and leaves, and the last three Saturdays in November for grass, leaves, and garden waste. (Same as in current contract)
2. Identify other specific free days in addition to the ones noted above.
3. Establish a particular period where all days within that timeframe are free to Story County residents.
4. Make all days of operation from April 1 through December 15 free to Story County residents.
5. Eliminate free days and require yard waste customers to pay a per use fee.



Discussion Item 5

Advertising

1. City of Ames can do all of the advertising needed to inform the citizens of the free days rather than the contractor providing the advertising. This will allow the message to be consistent and uniform with other City of Ames communications. This would also be a cost savings over contractor based advertising.
2. Continue to require the contractor to arrange for free day advertising.

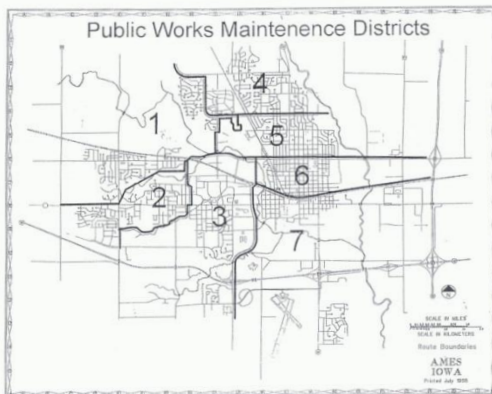


Discussion Item 6



Storm Damage Tree Cleanup

- A. Full collection city wide – 50% damage in four of the seven districts provides for full city wide collection by city crews and providing an area for free citizen drop off
- B. Full collection limited area - 50% damage in a limited area and provides for full collection by city crews in that limited area
- C. Intermediate City response – 25% damage in at least one district providing an area for free citizen drop off



Discussion Item 6

Storm Damage Tree Cleanup

1. Have the contractor be the designated site to handle tree debris from a C. Intermediate City Response level The City would be invoiced for each day that is declared for free drop off. The City of Ames would maintain responsibility for A. full collection city wide and B. full collection limited area.
2. Continue with current operations utilizing City staff, Parks Maintenance Facility and hire a contractor to grind debris as required.



Discussion Item 7

How Do We Pay For Free Days?

- A. Continue to fund this activity through the Resource Recovery Fund. Because we are required to manage the waste for all members of the county-wide system, this would continue to provide the most equitable distribution of costs to the members across Story County.
- B. Identify additional funding sources, such as Local Option Sales Tax or the General Fund. As noted above, this could shift a disproportionate share of the expenses to the City of Ames.



Discussion Item 8

Are There Other Options Council Wants to Explore?



Staff Contact Information

John C. Joiner, P.E.

Director of Public Works

515-239-5165

jjoiner@city.ames.ia.us

Gary Freel

Superintendent Resource Recovery

515-239-5235

gfreel@city.ames.ia.us

Bill Schmitt

Assistant Superintendent Resource Recovery

515-239-5238

bschmitt@city.ames.ia.us



Questions?

Thank You!

