

COUNCIL CONFERENCE MINUTES

October 12, 2010

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a conference at 5:35 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 12th day of October, 2010, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray, and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Atkins, Butler, Cubberley, Dillingham, Ezzell, Griffith, Kovach, Quinn, and Mayor Rosenthal

ABSENT: None

DISCUSSION REGARDING RESIDENTIAL COLLECTION OPERATIONS REVIEW.

Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, said Council approved a contract for a residential sanitation operations study to be conducted and R.W. Beck had prepared a Residential Collection Operations Review (RCOR) for Council review. He said it is very productive to do these studies from time to time, especially in a community with a lot of growth. Mr. Lewis introduced Mr. Dave Yanke, R.W. Beck, and said Mr. Yanke has been a water and solid waste consultant for 20 years and provide some good comparisons for efficiency and possible improvements to our residential collection.

Mr. Yanke provided an overview of the RCOR process and findings revealing that the overall solid waste utility is operating well. He said the solid waste process does not need a complete overhaul, just minor changes to make the process more efficient. He has worked with other Oklahoma cities on solid waste issues, i.e., Edmond, Bartlesville, and Oklahoma City, and cities in Texas and Arizona.

Mr. Yanke said the goal of the RCOR Study was to review the productivity of the residential collection operations, specifically the residential solid waste collection, including bulky collection. He said it is important when looking at routes and collection to remember they are inter-related; therefore, how a City handles one material can affect another, i.e., if a resident puts out more debris for recycling, generating less household waste for sanitation, then the sanitation trucks can theoretically collect more household waste before having to take loads to the transfer station. He said R.W. Beck reviewed the residential route collection; performed benchmarking looking at City ordinance(s), rates, and types of collection services offered; and developed a list of recommendations.

Mr. Yanke said the project approach began with an initial request to the City for information to collect data concerning customer counts and solid waste quantity reports, i.e., tons collected, processed, and disposed; historical expenditure and revenue/billing data; projected Sanitation budgets; vehicle and equipment inventories; and area route maps. He said the next step included meeting with City Staff to discuss key issues with regard to the current solid waste collection system.

Field observations were conducted March 23 and 24, 2010, to gather first hand insight into the operation. During field observation, two R.W. Beck Staff members rode with City Staff during daily collection routes and observed numerous collection practices. Data collected was entered into a database and analyzed to evaluate current efficiency and key collection metrics. Productive time per route, pounds per household, and set-out rate were also calculated. He said Norman is very fortunate that the Transfer Station and Fleet Divisions are located closely so it does not take a lot of time for the Sanitation drivers to make their routes or once their trucks are full, take disposal loads to the Transfer Station.

On the four routes observed, the *set-out rates* was calculated at 89%, which means 89% of the homes are putting out their polycarts and *uncontained material* next to polycarts was very minimal, i.e., trash bags, televisions, etc.

This is a good sign that residents know the rules and also helps with efficiency because the drivers do not have to exit their trucks to manually load the trash or leave a notice to the resident as to why they can not pick up the uncontained material. Mr. Yanke said *productive time per route* is approximately 5 1/2 hours, which is the time actually spent when the drivers are picking up cans and driving between households and does **not** include *time off routes* i.e., breaks and lunch periods, vehicle breakdowns, or when driving and unloading trucks at the Transfer Station.

Mr. Yanke said the *carts collected per hour on route*, including extra carts, is the most basic and fundamental metric that determines whether a system is operating at poor, average, or at an above average level of productivity. He said Norman collects 122 carts per hour and that number was a little low due to alley collection, but felt it could be raised to 140 or above. The *average tons per load* is an indirect measure of the adequacy of vehicle capacity and Mr. Yanke felt the 6.2 tons per load for an eight hour work day for Norman could also be a little higher.

The *loads per day per route* is a measure of both the appropriateness of vehicle capacity and whether the route is too long or short. Mr. Yanke said Norman averages two loads per day. He said additional findings from the study include: 10% of customers use a second cart, which is not uncommon; average weight of the carts are 35.8 lbs; and the average customers per route is 692.

R.W. Beck compiled data from benchmark communities within the region and assisted in evaluating their collection system or helped with transitioning to automated solid waste collection. Mr. Yanke said the benchmark communities compared to Norman's collection system are Edmond, OK; Oklahoma City, OK; Bartlesville, OK; Denton, TX; Victoria, TX; and Killeen, TX. He said all benchmark communities are automated, with the exception of Bartlesville, and overall from a cost standpoint Norman is very reasonably priced.

Residential Refuse Collection

Based on results from field observations, the comparison of benchmark communities, field notes regarding challenges, and feedback received from Staff, the following are recommendations for residential refuse collection for the City to consider:

- ***Revise or create new requirements related to polycart placement:*** restrictions that prohibit carts being placed too close to each other; placement direction away from utility poles, mailboxes, trees, parked cars, gas meters, etc.; and restricting use of alleyways located on busy streets.
- ***Increase distribution of outreach material:*** provide new customers with a new customer packet outlining collections days, as well as proper set-out guidelines; and periodically provide customers with information regarding recycling and waste reduction.
- ***Eliminate alleyway collection:*** largest impact on efficiency with current collection system; alleyways are narrow, inconsistently maintained, and riddled with overhanging trees, low-hanging power lines, gas meters, etc. Using an automated vehicle with curbside and alleyway set-outs on the same road result in inefficiencies. Alleyway collection should be reduced to the alleyways when frontage streets are inherently more dangerous due to traffic congestion, pedestrian safety, etc., and will be determined on a case by case basis. In order to determine which alleyways would provide sufficient space for safe collection, each driver should be requested to provide a list of alleyways that would be preferred over busy roadways.
- ***Evaluate switching collection system to four – ten hour days:*** current schedule is five – eight hour days; an operational savings can be achieved due to increased productive time on route without additional off-route time. The City should re-evaluate this alternative once additional route improvements have been made, i.e., reduced alley collection.

Mayor Rosenthal asked if recommendations identified which alleys to eliminate and Mr. Yanke said no, that was not part of the scope. He said Staff should request input from drivers and supervisors because they know why and where problems and challenges exist. He said on average, once the process is complete, 80-90% of alley pickups would be eliminated excluding streets with high pedestrian and traffic congestion.

Councilmember Kovach asked how the City would address the educational piece to mix and match. Mr. Yanke said Staff could handbill doors, attach notices to polycarts, or do a universal mailing informing/educating the residents of the new policy and when they need to begin placing polycarts at the curbside.

Mayor Rosenthal asked if R.W. Beck evaluated whether placing carts on one side of the street in rural areas would be beneficial because it would allow sanitation trucks to make only make one pass through instead of two and Mr. Yanke said it would be very efficient to do so. Councilmember Butler asked if a mini transfer station constructed in the east rural area was a possibility and Mr. Yanke said it is not a recommendation for Norman at this time. He said some cities place trailer(s) at a location for citizens but it is very costly.

Mr. Yanke said he wanted to emphasize that R.W. Beck does not recommend going from five, eight hour work days to four, ten hour work days until Norman utilizes other recommendations, i.e., reduced alley collection. Councilmember Kovach asked if four, ten hour work days would reduce collection days to four days per week instead of five and Mr. Yanke said yes. He said a lot of cities who implemented this program would collect garbage on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays; leaving Wednesdays available for preventative vehicle maintenance. If considered, Councilmember Kovach felt it might be a good idea to collect garbage on Tuesday through Friday; leaving Mondays open to address when most holiday(s) are scheduled for the City.

Mr. Yanke said another recommendation to consider, but only after the alley collection issue is addressed, is to balance routes, i.e., staff works as a team to collect the waste on a daily basis. Although each driver is assigned a specific route each day, the workday will not be complete until all the drivers have finished their assigned route. The routes should generally be closer in size than is currently the case and sized such that all drivers are able to finish the route at the approximately the same time.

Residential Recycling Collection

Mr. Yanke said although the residential recycling collection was not a focus of this study, R.W. Beck has several recommendations based on information gathered.

- ***Work with franchise hauler to increase recycling participation:*** currently there is no incentive for the City's contractor to increase diversion and pay percentage based on amount collected; it is common practice for cities to require franchise recycle haulers to disperse information periodically to promote recycling; Norman should re-evaluate the current recycling incentives set with current recycling contract; and as guidance, R.W. Beck recently completed a Recycling Contract Negotiation Guidebook which is available at no charge to Norman.
- ***Evaluate pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) billing structure:*** currently Norman provides three container sizes for solid waste collection: 32, 68, and 90 gallon containers and majority of customers opted for the 90 gallon container; increased recycling decreases costs associated with Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) disposal and can be expected to increase collection efficiency by decreasing generation of waste allowing for more customers to be collected in a single load; Norman should evaluate the option of a PAYT billing structure because such structure has demonstrated reducing disposal and increasing recycling, as more customers tend to minimize their monthly rate by choosing smaller cart(s) and placing more material in the recycling container.

Spring/Fall Cleanup

Norman currently collects bulky items, i.e., lumber, furniture, appliances, and carpet, twice a year in the Spring and Fall Clean Up Events. Seasonal collection is provided using assistance from multiple municipal departments, i.e., Streets, Line Maintenance, Fleet, and Parks and Recreation Departments. Mr. Yanke said the total fees are an average of \$215,000 annually and include personnel, equipment, disposal, and transport costs. Based on the desired level of service and the cost to provide, the City will need to evaluate the following options:

- ***Continue with seasonal events***: consider utilizing knuckle-boom/grapple trucks for larger collections;
- ***On-call collection***: residents only receive service when they call and schedule pick ups; daily routes are planned based on the service addresses; and schedule service based on the available capacity of the collection operation;
- ***Scheduled collection***: collection is provided on a fixed schedule; can vary from once a week to twice a year; and once per month and once per quarter are common;
- ***Drop-off collection***: if City chose not to provide seasonal collection and instead require residents to self-haul material to a drop-location, the City could choose to subsidize the disposal fees.

Yard Waste Collection

The City currently provides yard waste collection, i.e., grass, leaves, branches two inches in diameter or smaller cut in four foot lengths and bundled, to all their customers once per week. Based on the desired level of service and cost to provide yard waste collection, the City has several options to consider including:

- ***Continue to utilize contract labor during peak periods***: currently yard waste collection crews have a driver and one full-time laborer and during peak seasons the City adds temporary laborer;
- ***Reduce service frequency***; the City could consider providing yard waste collection service on a less frequent basis, i.e., such as every other week.

Mr. Yanke said he understood the City has been considering every other week collection of yard waste during the winter months and while this approach may be feasible, it would be important for the City to utilize the yard waste collection employees for other activities during these “off-season” months.

Department-wide Recommendations

The following recommendations should be a guide for Norman to help evaluate various options for improving the current collection operation and some will require additional analysis and evaluation.

- ***Increase coordination with the Fleet Department for procurement of vehicles***. Mr. Yanke said it is important the Fleet Department collaborate with the Sanitation Department when replacing vehicles and both departments should provide input into the specifications of the collection vehicles. He said while both departments are already working together, he recommended Staff schedule a work session where issues and specification modifications are discussed;
- ***Evaluate future use of Transfer Station***. With the construction of a new transfer station, the City may want to consider using the existing transfer station as a staging area for recyclable materials or a possible site for a local material recovery facility (MRF). Currently recyclable goods are being hauled to a MRF in Oklahoma City;
- ***Continue to regulate refrigerator disposal***. It is in the City’s best interest to enforce the removal of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) from refrigerators prior to set-out and during field observation R.W. Beck did not see any refrigerators set-out for collection that did not have the CFCs removed prior to collection. Mr. Yanke said this recommendation is made to ensure Norman continues to enforce this regulation and a list of licensed and insured companies that remove CFCs properly should be provided on the City website as well as in new customer solid waste brochure.

Mr. Yanke said the City currently has a good collection system and the recommendations will only increase operational efficiency. He said the first step in a recommended plan of action for the City is to eliminate alleyway collection, unless collection of waste on frontage streets is more dangerous due to traffic congestion and pedestrian safety. He said once changes to the set-out policy have been implemented, the next step for Norman should be evaluating its bulky program and implement any changes. The third step for Norman is to re-route all residential refuse collection, yard waste collection, and bulky collection routes to develop more efficient and better balanced routes. He said during the re-routing process, Norman should evaluate whether moving to four 10 hour days would better utilize collection vehicles and personnel. Mr. Yanke said the final step is to evaluate other aspects of the solid waste system to include incentives for its recycling collection contractor and utilization of the existing transfer station for recycling or other activities.

Mayor Rosenthal asked if the study determined the existing transfer station would be suitable for a MRF and Mr. Yanke said it would be a potential option for a local recycling operation. He emphasized Norman needed to evaluate how the recyclables are now being handled, i.e., sorting and separating, and decide if the existing transfer station would fit into the process. Councilmember Kovach asked about curbside recycling for cardboard and Mr. Yanke said cardboard is a good material to collect but can be bulky. He said citizens should have the cardboard/materials broken, stacked, and/or tied down before placing them at the curb and said this would be another educational piece when encouraging recycling.

Items submitted for the record

1. Final Residential Collection Operations Review dated October 2010, submitted by R.W. Beck

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor