



CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Richfield, Minnesota

City Council Work Session Virtual via WebEx

January 11, 2022

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Regan Gonzalez at 5:45 p.m. virtually via WebEx

Council Members Present: Maria Regan Gonzalez, Mayor; Mary Supple; Simon Trautmann (left 6:15 p.m.); Sean Hayford Oleary; and Ben Whalen

Staff Present: Katie Rodriguez, City Manager; Rachel Lindholm, Sustainability Specialist; Chris Swanson, Management Analyst; and Kari Sinning, City Clerk.

ITEM #1	ORGANIZED COLLECTION UPDATE AND RESIDENTIAL ORGANICS CREDIT
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Mayor Regan Gonzalez introduced City Manager Rodriguez who turned it over to Sustainability Specialist Lindholm. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm presented a summary of the statistics, the challenges and successes of the organized collection program.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez thanked Sustainability Specialist Lindholm for the work and time that was given to take care of the residents' issues and struggles with the implementation.

Council Member Whalen mentioned that calls have decreased for him for concerns and echoed the thanks that Mayor Regan Gonzalez gave.

Sustainability Specialist Lindholm shared a presentation on organics collection of which Richfield is the first city to have multiple different haulers and to have residents opt-in to the program and stated that under twenty-five percent of the organized collection program have opted-in for organics collection. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm explained a utility billing credit is available due to funds allocated from Hennepin County for the organics collection and described two different options to use the funds; Option 1: Credit all households in the program and Option 2: Credit households participating in organics collection. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm shared the pros and cons to both options but shared that staff is leaning more towards option one to incentivize more participation in organics collection.

Council Member Whalen asked for clarification about number of credits that would be given. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm explained that the lump sum fund we received was for 2021 and that it would more than likely be a one-time credit depending on the logistics of the utility billing. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm also explained in the future, that may change depending if the city wanted to return to something like the recycling utility credit that was used in the past.

Council Member Hayford Oleary asked why the funds could not be allocated to a different use instead of being a credit. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm stated that the sustainability budget was already set for compostable bags to be given to residents and that the Hennepin County fund would be allocated back to the residents. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm explained that in the future that a credit could continue due to the funding received.

Council Member Hayford Oleary questioned how giving a small amount to all households would incentivize new participation. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm stated that conversations with residents gave the impression that if they didn't notice the fee as much that they would be more inclined to participate.

Council Member Hayford Oleary asked if that we were to go with option two that residents might be upset that they aren't getting the credit and Sustainability Specialist Lindholm stated that there would be backlash from residents that did not receive the credit. Council Member Hayford Oleary leaned more towards option two but would not be mad if staff chose option one.

Council Member Supple leaned towards option one due to the fact that all are receiving the credit but could live either way.

Council Member Whalen shared his opinions on the two options which he had a slight preference for option two and he also shared a curiosity of use the funds. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm stated that in the future the credit for option one would stay the same and that the credit for option two would decrease overtime as more residents would be participating. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm stated that the funds must be used for organics but that there is a list of accepted uses of the funds that we could look at in the future.

City Manager Rodriguez shared that the contract with the haulers for organics collection would change if more residents participated and that the funds could be used to keep the organics fee charged to the resident at five dollars.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez stated that either option would be okay but leaned more towards option two.

Sustainability Specialist Lindholm gave a summary from the Council of the two options of which there was not a strong consensus for one or the other however most council members leaned toward option two. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm explained there is room for flexibility in the options in the future.

Council Member Supple thanked Sustainability Specialist Lindholm and the staff for the wonderful job.

Council Member Whalen asked for clarification on which option staff would recommend since the Council did not have a clear direction. Sustainability Specialist Lindholm stated that option one is more preferred by staff so that all organized collection residents are receiving the same regardless of participation in the organics collection. She also stated that this process can be improved over time as staff receives feedback from residents. If the Council were to prefer option two, staff would not be disappointed with that choice.

Council Member Hayford Oleary changed his opinion for option one due to the previous comments made by Council Members and Sustainability Specialist Lindholm and to have more direction from council.


Mayor Regan Gonzalez agreed with that response from Council Member Hayford Oleary.

Sustainability Specialist Lindholm explained the next steps are to align the logistics with LOGIS and utility billing to know a timeframe and more information before for a final decision is made of which council would be informed when that time comes.


ADJOURNMENT


The work session was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:32 p.m.

Date Approved: January 25, 2022



Kari Sinning
City Clerk



Maria Regan Gonzalez
Mayor


Katie Rodriguez
City Manager