



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes - Final

City Council

Monday, June 2, 2025
5:00 PM

Pre-Council - Final-Revised

City Hall
Conference Room
1A/1B
701 E. Broadway
Columbia, MO

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Buffaloe called the meeting to order at approximately 5:01 p.m.

Present: 4 - Buffaloe, Foster, Waterman, and Peters

Absent: 2 - Carroll, and Sample

Material Recovery Facility Discussion

Attachments: [Material Recovery Facility Presentation](#)
[Recycling and Waste Diversion Program Evaluation Report](#)
[Material Recovery Facility Feasibility Report](#)

Kate Vasquez from RRT presented options for the future of recycling in Columbia. She discussed some previous research, noting a strong interest in recycling though there had been issues at the drop off centers. The current conditions offer an opportunity to reduce contamination.

The overall waste composition included 21% that could have been recycled, 38% could have been diverted in other ways (i.e. organics, electronics, etc.). The cardboard that could be diverted to recycling was primarily from commercial rather than residential.

Options

Kate provided a review of the options for a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) rebuild. Each involved building a new facility on the existing site.

- A) Building a new MRF on the existing site and utilizing as much of the former building as possible
- B) Building a new MRP next to the former building where the Landfill Operations Center (LOC) is currently located
- C) Building a new MRF on the gravel lot west of the administrative building

Each option has pros and cons. Scenario A is now the most expedient as there isn't much to demo or shut down, and is also the most cost effective. Scenario B offers the best integration with the other capital plans due to traffic constraints. A solid waste permit would be needed for any of the three options.

Kate provided an example for processing equipment in a dual stream system, similar to the former system. The system is designed to collect materials where there is a market. She also noted the staffing needs for the example - four positions required to work the

line compared to the 12 full-time and 2 part-time used for our system.

The former MRF only had five bunkers which led to various commodities being sorted together. The current design of MRFs have been adapted to be more flexible to adjust to changes in the market.

Kate reviewed a high level cost estimate for each project.

Transfer

She also covered the potential to transport materials to Jefferson City, MO. This had been set aside previously, as the closest option at the time was St. Louis. The capital expenditures for this option would be significantly less than building a new MRF. There are intangible benefits to the City owning their own MRF, but they were not included in the ranking. The benefits of the transfer option is that it can be done more quickly.

During the discussion, the consultant agreed to revisit the scoring and ranking chart due to the need to rebuild the LOC in Scenario B.

Multimaterial Environmental Center

This would be a one stop shop that is staffed and would allow residents to drop off multiple materials, including household hazardous waste. This option would also allow for greater flexibility on what can be recycled. For instance, a 5 gallon bucket is valuable but difficult to collect in the current system. This would also allow for glass recycling due to a staffed option to reduce the risk of contamination - the issue with collecting glass in the dual stream recycling system is the high risk of contamination.

Example graphics of this are from Olmsted County, MN; Tampa, FL; and Charlottesville, VA.

Timelines

Potential scheduling offered was very high level for each of the three options: rebuilding a MRF, exploring a transfer option, or creating a multimaterial environmental center. The MRF option could be up to 30 months. The transfer option could be done more quickly in a few months, but will also be dependent on the selected site. The multimaterial center could be between 18-24 months, depending on the type of building desired.

Republic and Federal are the two companies in Jefferson City that could be considered in the transfer option.

Utilities Director Erin Keys presented an update on the MRF and Solid Waste finances. The demolition contractor is substantially complete with the demo. An electric contractor is assisting with repairs to the bailer - if this is repaired some items could be recycled in the interim. Staff is working with insurance, with an estimate of \$3-4 million. The MRF was a 20 year old building with over 20 year old equipment. A community survey is planned to get input from the residents on what their priorities are.

Other expected expenses that have not yet been considered are compensation increases, inflation, automated recycling, and the landfill expansion. While recycling is an important community benefit, it operates at a loss. Assuming revenue and rates remain the same, the Solid Waste utility will be below cash reserve target by 2031 - this is even before the need for a new MRF.

A cost of service study is planned for FY 2026. The previous cost of service study from FY 2021 included a 7.5% revenue increase, though Council did not direct staff to move forward with this.

Staff is proposing moving forward with automated recycling collection in FY 2026. To do this, four additional side loader trucks would be needed to accommodate. Residents would receive a 95 gallon cart for curbside recycling (\$55/cart, one time expense of around \$2.75 million). A significant education program would also be needed. This would also include plastics being separated from cardboards, though the blue bags would be discontinued.

In total the one time costs would be around \$3.748 million, and the annual costs would be around \$186,000 with a reduction of around \$385,000 in following years due to discontinuing the blue bags.

Council noted some concerns with a transfer option due to the for-profit nature, though there was some agreement on exploring a transfer option in the short term. They requested more thorough cost comparisons.

Council requested costs for automated recycling to be included in the proposed budget.

II. ANY OTHER ITEMS COUNCIL MAY WISH TO DISCUSS

None.

III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.