



Department Source: City Utilities - Solid Waste
To: City Council
From: City Manager & Staff
Council Meeting Date: August 6, 2018
Re: Residential Curbside Collection Status Report

Executive Summary

City of Columbia Utilities - Solid Waste Utility continues to experience staff shortages in residential curbside refuse and recycling collections. Almost three years after a 2016 public vote determined citizens wished to maintain curbside bag collection for refuse and recycling, the utility continues to face hurdles to deliver reliable service.

Discussion

The Solid Waste Utility continues to experience staff vacancies for residential curbside refuse and recycling collections. The vacancies are impacting the ability of the utility to provide adequate service for residential customers. There are three significant issues that relate to the low staffing that is currently being experienced:

- High worker turnover
- Low and stagnant wages
- Workers' safety concerns and corresponding workers' compensation costs

Finding employees who want to engage in demanding and dangerous physical labor at the existing hourly wages has been increasingly difficult. Due to absences from injury, attendance issues, and vacancies, the FY15 budget for the Solid Waste utility added two Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions in residential curbside collections. The Solid Waste Utility is currently unable to fill all of the refuse collector positions. There are three refuse collector position titles and the current starting salary is \$12.53 – \$15.99 per hour.

Each day to collect both residential refuse and recycling, eight refuse trucks and five recycling trucks are required to be staffed with a minimum of two staff, assuming both staff have a valid Commercial Drivers License (CDL). In turn, this requires a minimum of 26 staff members to report daily. Currently there are seven (7) vacancies in residential curbside collections and two (2) long term absences. Included with this report are vacancy reports for all the City of Columbia Utilities.

Health, Safety, and Well-Being, along with Workforce, are two of the City of Columbia Strategic Priorities. The work is inherently hard and dangerous. The most recent national reports from the Bureau of Labor Standards show that refuse collectors hold the dubious distinction of being in the top ten most dangerous professions in the US.

(<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cfoi.pdf>) (2017 data).

Workers' safety is a number one priority for the utility and below is the 10 year history of Solid Waste Utility worker injury rates and corresponding workers' compensation claims in its residential trash collections division.



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

City of Columbia Workers' Compensation Solid Waste, Residential Trash Collection, as of July 31, 2018		
Year	Frequency	Severity
FY 2008	34	\$68,046.59
FY 2009	31	\$53,142.30
FY 2010	17	\$19,431.06
FY 2011	13	\$448,064.72
FY 2012	18	\$85,414.25
FY 2013	21	\$62,566.21
FY 2014	35	\$316,241.67
FY2015	22	\$24,016.99
FY2016	19	\$66,463.72
FY2017	21	\$121,735.46
FY2018 YTD	19	\$169,438.15
Total	250	\$1,434,560.90*
Avg	25	\$143,456.09

FY2011 includes one claim totaling \$436,450

FY2014 includes one claim totaling \$219,100

*Includes only workers comp claims and payments by the City of Columbia workers compensation. Temporary employees from temp agencies are not included in the claim numbers or payments.

Due to the vacancies the utility has been experiencing, the utility began to use a combination of city employed temporary staff and staff from temporary staffing agencies in an effort to continue providing the existing level of service for curbside collection of refuse and recycling. To date, the City has used the service of four temporary agencies to fill the shortage of staff due to the high vacancy rate. One of these agencies will no longer provide temporary staff members to the utility primarily due to high workers compensation claims. Two of the others quit providing service for other reasons. The fourth, and current temporary agency, required a significant increase in the hourly dollar figure to provide temporary staff. Included is a history of the increase in the cost the utility has experienced and anticipates due to the increased use of temporary staffing agencies.



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When temporary staffing is utilized, it is typical that two (2) temporary staff are required for every one (1) vacancy. This is due to temporary staff members not having the required CDL to operate the equipment. A CDL operator drives the truck and two temporary staff members alternate collecting the refuse or recycling from the curb.

At times, the temporary agencies are unable to fulfill the number of staff members needed to adequately staff the curbside collection routes on a given day. In these instances, routes must be split and staff is required to work longer hours and supervisory staff are utilized to supplement daily staffing needs. Recently, a temporary staffing agency notified the City they could no longer provide staff, resulting in a severe staffing shortage requiring the Utility to prioritize how collections would be completed. In this instance, it was determined that refuse (trash) would be collected on the normal collection day since leaving trash out for extended periods could be a health and public safety concern. Residents were asked to place recycling at the curb on the normal collection day and it would be picked up that day or later in the week.

Should the utility experience future critical staffing shortages, the priority for collections will be that all refuse be collected on the normal collection day due to the potential health and safety issue. The utility will notify the customers of the plans for recycling collection, as soon as possible, once the plan of action has been determined due to the severity of the staffing shortage.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: NA
Long-Term Impact: NA

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Operational Excellence, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action

Suggested Council Action

This report is for council information as requested.