

Bobbie Walthall

To: Barry Walthall
Subject: RE: Statement Regarding Proposed Resolution No. 6918: A task force for solid waste/recycling issues

From: lauri di routh [mailto:lauridi@hotmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2011 12:09 PM

To: aron cromwell; robchestnut@sunflower.com; mikeamx515@hotmail.com; mike dever; David L. Corliss; Tammy Bennett; Barry Walthall

Cc: rrcab

Subject: Statement Regarding Proposed Resolution No. 6918: A task force for solid waste/recycling issues

February 15, 2011

Statement Regarding Proposed Resolution No. 6918: A task force for solid waste/recycling issues

I congratulate the City on taking steps to improve solid waste and recycling services for our citizens. Generally, I like the idea of a task force as part of our process, as I think public buy-in and participation is crucial for any proposed changes to succeed.

That said, I do not think the taskforce proposal, as structured, will work.

This appears to be a taskforce (comprised of as of yet unnamed representatives) that will be expected to function without adequate facilitation or support. The task force as proposed is also being given an unrealistically short deadline. I do not believe that 3 months of ad-hoc community discussion will allow sufficient time or depth of research necessary to make wise (and binding) policy decisions that may cost the City millions and change the face of solid waste management in our community forever. The City needs to have a realistic timeline for the creation of a workable plan. A 2012 budget planning timeline is unrealistic.

As I have said before: the City needs professional help. Long range solid waste planning which seeks to manifest wholesale changes to the City's solid waste system must not be done in piecemeal fashion. We have been cobbling together recycling for over a decade. Now, we are proposing to use that same flawed model for determining a new system for solid waste collection and disposal. It doesn't make sense. **The task force can be an important part of this process but it cannot be expected to shoulder the whole burden.**

We are willing to spend money for outside assistance and consultants for a wide variety of community concerns: customer satisfaction surveys; retail service studies; road and infrastructure design and engineering; economic development; public transit.

Why are we not willing to spend money on solid waste planning?

I worry that with this proposal, we are delegating the destiny of one of the City's most crucial functions to a largely informal decision making body that will not have the information or resources necessary to do what you are asking them to do.

Specifically, in regard to section 2 of the proposal, I do not support extensive in-house “articulation” of the status quo, unless we are willing to have an honest discussion, and assess gaps in our current system. We need to avoid wasting time on self-congratulatory window dressing.

Here is what I think we need in a solid waste plan:

An objective, data driven planning process, one that is guided by professionals without bias (i.e. staff and vendors alone cannot and should not drive this process; we’ve tried that before, and it has not benefitted the City). The solid waste division is currently a department without leadership. Neither staff nor a task force as proposed can be expected to do the work needed without help.

The plan needs to be accompanied by comprehensive budget projections that will describe exactly much proposed changes will cost us, over the long run. Full cost accounting in the solid waste division is long overdue.

The plan also needs to define what criteria we will use to measure our success.

As unpopular as it may be in some circles, I remain convinced that our community must transition toward PAYT for residential and multi-family dwellings. We need a unit based pricing structure that reflects the true cost of waste management and provides an economic incentive for the generators to minimize waste generation and disposal. **Free unlimited municipal trash service is an invitation to uncontrolled costs, now and in future.**

The status quo provides a profound disincentive to recycle or to reduce waste.

The City also needs to take seriously its responsibility to address current and future recycling facilities and vendors, and their impacts on environmental health and public safety. Currently, we do not have adequate siting criteria or site evaluation processes for recycling facilities nor has the City moved forward to ensure that those businesses currently offering recycling services are vetted, insured or licensed. If privatization in any form is part of the plan, or allowed to remain as a pillar in the City's system, these issues must be addressed.

I appreciate your consideration of my thoughts, and ask that my comments here be included in the public record. Thank you for your service to the City and its citizenry.