

SWAC

Solid Waste Advisory Committee

King Street Center ■ 201 South Jackson Street, Suite 6400 ■ Seattle, WA 98104-3855

June 13, 2025

To: King County Executive Shannon Braddock
King County Councilmember Rod Dembowski
King County Councilmember Girmay Zahilay
King County Councilmember Sarah Perry
King County Councilmember Jorge L. Barón
King County Councilmember De'Sean Quinn
King County Councilmember Claudia Balducci
King County Councilmember Pete Von Reichbauer
King County Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda
King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn

CC: John Taylor, Department of Natural Resources and Parks Director
Rebecca Singer, Solid Waste Division Director

RE: ADVISORY NOTE IN SUPPORT OF THE ONE-YEAR 2026 SOLID WASTE RATE INCREASE PROPOSAL & UTILITY RATE AFFORDABILITY SUMMIT IN 2025

Dear Executive Braddock, Council President Balducci, and Councilmembers,

The Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) recognizes the continuing need for an adequate revenue stream to support the County's essential solid waste system. SWAC also recognizes the substantial headwinds in Washington state and national economic forecasts and has significant concerns about the considerable cost of living in King County, including rising rates across all utilities in the region.

After months of review, SWAC supports ensuring continued progress on key capital improvement projects, such as transfer station modernization and optimizing disposal capacity at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill, as well as sustaining important programs to divert recyclable resources from disposal and prepare for the implementation of the State's new Extended Producer Responsibility "EPR" Law (SB5484). Toward these objectives, we concur with King County's Solid Waste Division's proposed 2026 rates which include an 8% increase on the commercial tipping fee, a 12.5% increase on the self-haul tipping fee, a 12.5% increase on the yard waste fee, and a 15% increase on the fixed annual charge. The impact of King County Solid Waste rate increases for a typical residential customer with a 32-gallon can, is forecasted to be \$0.71 per month in 2026.

Our deepest concern is that rates forecasted for the near future are untenable and unsustainable for our residential and business ratepayers. Rates are increasing region-wide across multiple utilities, as part of broader increases in the cost of living. Considering these challenges, we are concerned that annual rate increases at this pace will eventually no longer be affordable for all ratepayers, including and extending beyond low-income ratepayers. We support SWD's decision to comprehensively re-evaluate their forecasts and capital planning in the next year and urge the division to further explore alternatives to planning assumptions and expenditures to minimize significant price increases to ratepayers in the years

ahead. Along these lines, we absolutely support Executive Braddock's proposal to host a Regional Utilities Rate Affordability Summit shortly.

Fiscal accountability and responsible stewardship of public funds is a priority for SWAC members, and we are mindful of how this rate increase could negatively impact residential and business customers. In an effort to be adaptable to current, unique circumstances that include the recent hiring of a new Solid Waste Division Director and concerns about the current rate path ([highlighted by the County Auditor](#)), SWAC supports the Solid Waste Division making an exception to the typical, preferable two-year rate setting timeframe with a one-year rate setting approach in 2026. This approach provides an opportunity for a comprehensive examination of this enterprise fund revenue requirement, necessary capital project expenditures, reserve fund levels, and additional options for rate mitigation.

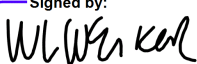
The Division's 2026 rate proposal will fund these key priorities:


- Continue long range disposal planning and stakeholder engagement for the County's Cedar Hills Landfill currently serving 37 cities in King County when it reaches capacity (expected 2038).
- Transition operations of the newly acquired renewable natural gas plant at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill (BEW agreement).
- Decrease the tonnage of materials being landfilled by adopting waste prevention and resource recovery programs, such as Re+ and implementing the new State EPR Law for paper and packaging.
- Implement planned transfer station capital improvements that create family-wage jobs and expand recycling access to communities that are currently underserved.
- Provide access to recycling and waste disposal services seven days a week at eight transfer stations and six days a week at two rural drop box locations

This 2026 solid waste rate increase proposal was discussed in the January, February, March, April and May SWAC meetings this year. The Solid Waste Division also hosted an Advisory Committee Rate Open House in March and an Advisory Committee Rate Special Session in April to further engage with Advisory Committees on the complexities of our budget components and how they interact with contracted or UTC collections services rates at the municipal levels. As you may know, these disposal and collections service rates combine into one overall rate increase every year that residential and business customers pay in their monthly garbage bills to our curbside collections service providers.

Your SWAC members appreciate the 2026 disposal rate dialogue we had with County staff, and they had with the Metropolitan Solid Waste Advisory Committee (MSWAC) members over these many months. We now ultimately support the staff recommendation on this responsible 2026 rate package to advance the County's crucial solid waste system infrastructure needs and important climate action work.

Signed on behalf of SWAC,

Signed by:

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Wendy Weiker
Chair, SWAC
Sustainability and Community
Outreach Manager, Republic Services

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William Louie
Vice-Chair, SWAC
Interested Resident