



King County

Dow Constantine

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www.kingcounty.gov

June 3, 2021

The Honorable Claudia Balducci
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

This letter transmits a proposed ordinance that, if enacted, would increase King County's fees for the disposal of municipal solid waste charged at transfer stations or the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill (CHRLF) when customers use the facilities, as well as other fees described below. Approval of the proposed legislation would enable King County to maintain essential solid waste disposal and recycling services and generate the revenue needed to carry out programmatic responsibilities required under adopted policies, including those in the *2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan*.

The proposed change would increase the current rate of \$140.82 per ton to \$154.02 per ton in 2022. On average, the change would add \$0.71 to the single-family monthly curbside bill in 2022. The rate proposal also introduces new sources of revenue, including a new mattress handling fee and the sale of surplus properties. These sources of revenue reduce the need for additional increases and balance the cost of delivering services and the fees charged. Another boost in revenues comes from an increase in the yard and wood waste fees from \$75 per ton to \$100 per ton. This fee has been in place since 2013, however, the cost of providing this service to customers is higher than the current \$75 per ton. Increasing this fee will bring it closer to the cost of providing this service. This rate proposal also includes making permanent the Cleanup-LIFT low-income discount program, which provides a discount equal to half the minimum fee for self-haul customers who show an ORCA LIFT, Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), or Medicaid card at transfer stations.

Last year, guided by stakeholder input, I determined that a 2021 rate increase would not occur. Rate and cost analyses for 2022 found that a second year of no rate increases would require impactful service reductions and larger future rate increases. Without increasing rates, King County would be unable to continue essential solid waste services the public expects and relies

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on, including recycling and waste disposal services at transfer stations and drop boxes, continued operations at the CHRLF, and recycling and waste-prevention programs.

The Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Advisory Committee and the Solid Waste Advisory Committee were briefed monthly, from December 2020 through April 2021, on the rate increase included in this proposed legislation and both committees expressed support for a rate increase in the enclosed letters.

The proposed legislation would allow continued implementation of actions outlined in the *2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan*, including capital projects such as the South County Recycling and Transfer Station in Algona, the future Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station, and further development at CHRLF. Investment in these critical infrastructure projects is driving estimated total capital spending close to \$500 million through 2026. A rate adjustment now will ensure a smoother rate path going into the future years and is generally a preferred approach by DNRP's city partners.

The proposed legislation furthers the King County Strategic Plan objective of aligning funding, policy, and operational goals of King County government with community priorities. The proposal also advances the service-accessibility goals in the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan by making the Cleanup LIFT low-income discount permanent for transfer station self-haul customers, decreasing the cost burden on vulnerable populations. In addition, the proposed legislation supports the goals in the Strategic Climate Action Plan related to energy and preparation for climate change impacts by piloting electric tractor trailers to haul recyclables; substituting regular diesel with green, renewable fuel; and further improving landfill gas collection at the CHRLF and closed landfills.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed ordinance. This important legislation enables King County to continue to provide essential, safe, reliable, efficient, and environmentally sustainable solid waste transfer, recycling, and disposal services, and help the County continue move toward zero waste of resources.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Pat D. McLaughlin, Division Director of the Solid Waste Division of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, at 206-477-4501.

Sincerely,



for

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

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ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

Shannon Braddock, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Karan Gill, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive

Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)

Pat D. McLaughlin, Division Director, Solid Waste Division, DNRP