

Garbage Haulers for Citizen Choice

Solid Waste Collection **Anoka City Council Meeting – Public Comment** **February 3, 2020**

Present: Phil Rice, Anoka City Mayor
[Unidentified Speakers Noted as Male or Female Speaker]

Mayor Rice

. . . hoping if there's anyone that would like to speak to Council on any item not found later in the agenda, they may do so. Before you speak, I want to read — because I kind of have a hunch why the room is full — and so let me read this message from our City Manager first.

“On Thursday, January 23rd, the City of Anoka held an Open House at Greenhaven Golf Course and Event Center from 6:00 until 8:00 p.m. to present information on organized solid waste collection. Citizen feedback was encouraged, and feedback forms were provided that evening and are online on the city website. The Open House was advertised through these communication tools: the *City View Newsletter* Winter Edition, city website, social media, electronic reader board on Main & Ferry, City Hall lobby monitor; Council calendar, an article in the ABC newspapers, e-subscribed email blast messages, e-mail message to all licensed haulers in the city.”

The presentation was videotaped and was placed on the website the following day, along with the PowerPoint presentation and feedback form. This subject is not an item on tonight's agenda, and therefore no action will be taken tonight. The City Council had planned and still plans to have discussed this subject at the February 24th Work Session. There will be — I'm sorry — there will — where they will receive a full report from staff on the feedback received from residents. Council will not take any action at that work session but will direct staff on how to proceed. Feedback forms are available in the Council work session room,” which is the room right behind us. There should be forms on the tables in that room]. We encourage residents to complete a form, turn it in tonight, or submit it to City Hall as indicated on the form. Forms are due by February 10th, or please feel free to email any councilmember and your message will be sent to staff to be included in the report.

The other thing I want to mention is that there are a lot of people here, and as far as I'm aware of, there are two positions on this issue: ***I understand this and I am going for it***, or ***I understand this and I would choose not to move toward organized collection***. And so we could be here for quite a while if we have a lot of people who want to take five minutes to explain their position. What I would suggest is that if one or two or three people get up and say essentially exactly what you want to say, you could either choose to step forward and say, “I agree with Mr. So-and-So or

Mrs. So-and-So,” or, “I disagree for these reasons,” or however you want to do it. But just for the sake of time, we would be able to then track who is speaking and what their position is but not to have to take, you know, several hours to get through this group.

Sorry for the delay. Go ahead. Tell us your name and the —

Dave Wiggins

That’s quite all right.

Mayor Rice

— and the city you live in.

Dave Wiggins

I live at 19671 Yellow Pine Street in Oak Grove. I’m the Division Vice President for Ace Solid Waste, and I’d like to — after listening — I listened to the audio of your December 9th City Council meeting, and in that, I heard a lot of facts that you all were given — data points of weights of trucks and a variety of things — that made me think. I said, “They don’t sound accurate to me,” and so I did some quick research into the data that’s available to me, to go through it.

But I’d like to — and I’ll be brief; I promise —

Mayor Rice

Thank you.

Dave Wiggins

But I’d like to talk about just going from your audio, and if I misheard — because the quality of it’s not the greatest, so feel free to correct me if I misspeak — but one of the things that I understand, and usually in these kind of situations, the cities are saying, “Well, we want to preserve our streets, and we’re going to — in the process, we’re going to save the citizens money on their garbage bill.” And one of the statements that I heard I’ll read to you, from your City Manager.

The quote is, “I was really trying to go to the angle of it’s going to ultimately save citizens money, because, intuitively, picking up every house, you can do that for — more efficiently than picking up at every sixth house, which is what they’re generally doing now. So theoretically, the cost should be far less if they pick up every house, but the data we’re getting now from Blaine and Champlin and the other cities that have single haulers is not really showing that.”

I’m kind of disappointed with his statement. Along with that, is the — in one of the slides that was given at the Open House recently, is the data that says one garbage truck equals the damage of 1,279 vehicles. That is a study that was done by a Dr. James Wilde, and he created a formula that cities should use to calculate, based on their cities, how much damage a truck makes. And in that, in 2018, the City Manager of New Hope was in a similar situation as you all, and so he

called Mr. Wilde and found him. He's a professor at a university in Texas. And he quickly said, "I don't know how they come up with 1,000 vehicles, because you have to use the formula." And he referred to the fact that 1,279 vehicles had come from Fort Collins, Colorado, where there's a landfill with no scale. So they are — they don't weigh the trucks. So the garbage haulers back in those days filled them just as full as they could, took them across the scale and took them to the dump. They're charged by however much they — however big their truck is. So that data is not accurate for us.

With that, some other statements that were made, this — pertaining — coming from your city minutes. Statements that were related to truck weight. Someone — I couldn't tell who — said that they, meaning the garbage haulers, seem to hide what they weigh. I'm here to clarify. In a minute, I'll tell you what our trucks weigh, but it's all owned by them and it's hard to get by the city manager. One says, "Did I read they're 44,000 pounds empty?" Another, "They're generically 80,000 pounds, you know, loaded." The city manager — "But even if it's 80,000 pounds, it's probably more than that." So these are the data points you all are making your decisions to play a Russian Roulette with my business.

Comments about the spring road restrictions by the City Manager — "There are three axles, so that puts about 12 to 14 tons per axle when our spring weight limit is 5. They're big, they're beating up our streets. They don't need to weigh 50 tons. They could go smaller loads during the spring axle-weight limit time." There's another comment related to the damages and what the cost savings were. One says, "There's no numbers in here. This is all just talk. Maybe it's less; maybe it's more." Some studies say it's directly related; some say that it's not. The City Manager says it's really hard to quantify, so he's the one saying you're going to save the money.

So just from the facts, to clarify, I took the residential trucks that Ace picked up in the City of Anoka on the third week of January last month. The lightest truck that's fully loaded was 44,000 pounds. The heaviest residential truck weighed 46,000 pounds, much less than 50 tons that we're being accused of running up and down your streets. These trucks also had four axles on them. We put the biggest tires we can legally run on them so that it spreads out the weight of the trucks and so the pounds per square inch is pretty minimal.

Another study that I did on my own was to just simply say what if I didn't know what a truck weighed? How would I find out? So I Googled it — what's an empty garbage truck weigh? According to Google, big bold print on the very first thing, it's 33,000 pounds, and it says the maximum load weight is 51,000 pounds. And that's true. Our trucks weigh a little more than that empty, but we don't get that full — heavy.

I compared our weights to a school bus, and I contacted our Michelin tire dealers, so I knew how many square inches each size tire puts on your roads, and I took a 72-passenger school bus, and I looked up the weight on it on Google, and the state of Georgia happens to have the weights of varying brands of trucks — or buses. They vary from 20,000 pounds to 21,000 pounds, empty. I assumed it's 70 kids weighing 75 pounds. If it's elementary kids, it's probably less than that. If it's a high school football team, it weighs a lot more, but at 25,000 pounds, is the weight I used,

and that school bus puts 2.03 pounds per square inch of pressure on your roads, fully loaded. My garbage truck puts 1.44, substantially less. I don't argue that the school bus is no big deal either, but my truck is much less, and I'm the one getting my business threatened.

If you have any questions, because in spite of what's being presented to you — I just told you everything that was supposedly a big secret — my phone number is 763-427-3110. Our office is open every day. You're welcome to call me.

Mayor Rice

Who's next? Then step up.

Barb Thurston, 1815 3rd Avenue

I live at 1815 Third Avenue South here in Anoka, and I had a couple questions, first off, before I made my comments. When and if you go to citywide, you know, single haulers, how often does the city negotiate the contracts, and how many — if it's divided in percentages of what the haulers have now, say, one has 50 percent, one has 10 percent, one has another 25, somebody has 5, do they all have to come to the same agreement for the same price for each residential home?

Mayor Rice

I'm tempted to say, "Ahh." First of all, the process is long for us. And so the first question was —

Barb Thurston

How often do you renegotiate?

Mayor Rice

How often? And so we haven't established that. If we move forward in this, then those are the sorts of rules that we'll figure out. In my mind, I picture that being every three or four years that we would request proposals. I'm not sure that that's realistic, so we would have to probably get feedback from the haulers themselves and say, you know, they have to spread their cans throughout the whole city and one has to collect them while the other one sets them out, and how realistic or practical that is, to change that every other year or every third year or whatever that is, and so don't know the answer to that. But that would be some of the stuff that we'd be looking for over the next period of time.

The other piece is that the garbage. If we as a city council, decide to move forward with organized hauling, then it's up to the haulers to come to some agreement about that, how they're going to arrange the city and how they're going to collect on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. And so that would be yet to be decided as well. It's really —

Barb Thurston

So the haulers —

Mayor Rice

— on the haulers to come up with —

Barb Thurston

The haulers would come together and negotiate a price between themselves, so everybody in the city would have the same price?

Mayor Rice

I don't know that one either, but I'm assuming that they have to come to us with a proposal that they've agreed on, and so it seems reasonable that they would probably arrive at a price. It may be that if someone is hauling less, they would want more per — or something like that, but it would be — I think it would be rationalized through the argument and through the process.

Barb Thurston

Okay. And then a couple of comments that I had, is I remember doing this in 2015. I spoke up, and I said I want my choice, I want to be able to pick what I want, but I've changed my mind. I'll tell you why.

One reason is because we had the street renewal go down our streets, and we got a bill for \$7,500, and that was a shock, and when two years before that, we had a house over in another section of town that was — the street was done, that one was \$5,600, \$5,700, so that's a lot of money.

The other reason I've changed my mind is my garbage hauler last fall raised our rates. We were paying about, I don't know, \$56, \$54-something for every three months. Now it's \$76. That's a lot of money, and they don't want to negotiate. So they're saying they want to, you know, work with people. That's not true.

The other thing was this weekend we were watching — not the Super Bowl, but golf — and Waste Management was sponsoring this special golf tournament down in Scottsdale. It's a major pro tournament. I mean, they've got lots of money, so if they're making money off of us, why do they want to change to a — they don't want a single-hauler thing. They must be making enough money now instead of going to the single hauler where they say that's going to be better for us. Well, I'm not so sure. So I think that's about all I had.

The other thing was that right now with the City of Anoka and in many cities, you don't have a choice of what your electric company is, your gas company, even your cable companies, they only run lines in a city. So this wouldn't be much different. This is one of the minor things that we pay every month, so I'm just saying I'd be okay to be able to not have bills of \$7-plus thousand dollars if my street was renewed. So thank you.

Mayor Rice

Thank you.

Roger Olsen, 402 River Lane

Good evening. I live at 402 River Lane, right here in Anoka. And I came here tonight, because I got this thing in the mail, that said, “Danger, Big Government.” It seems like Anoka has entered the realm of big government now, and you’re plotting — it says that too — to lose my choice. Well, I thought that was worth a comment, and it goes something like this. We moved here like seven years ago, and since you tend to vote your pocketbook more than anything else, we contacted three different haulers, looked for the lowest price, took the lowest price. And then about two years later the hauler that we had chosen raised the price. Well, like anything else, you go call a couple of other haulers and say, “Would you lower your price to meet this or beat it?” And of course they do, and then you go back to the first hauler and say, “Well, now you have two choices. You can lower your price to meet your competition, or you can lose a customer.” And of course they lowered the price, which just seems to indicate that haulers, like a lot of businesses, have a good degree of margin that they can execute competitively if they choose to do so.

Going forward, you look at realities of what’s happening on a street. We live on a cul de sac, so on Monday, five different trucks come down that street during all hours of the day. They make a lot of noise. Oh, and on a recycle day, that becomes six trucks. You actually drive up the street and over about a half a block, you’ll find about three more, so now you’ve got about six to nine different haulers, all of which are coming down and running the blacktop. And because we live on a cul de sac they have to make the turn, and they can’t make the turn, so they have to back up and try again and they tear up the street. Tearing up the street requires that the City of Anoka comes two or three times a year and tries and repairs the street using tax dollars that we and everyone else pays that could probably be used for better sources and better things than that. So at the end of the day, you take a look and say, “Well, here’s the reality. There seems to be enough margin in these companies, where if they have the logistical wherewithal to serve the city, then they could probably do so at a lower price.” In fact, if any one of them had the tactical business sense to go down the street and go door to door and say, “Hey, if all of you people will sign up with me, I’ll lower the price immediately and give you a much better deal, because after all, my truck’s coming down the street every week anyway.” So if you magnify that to the City of Anoka and say, “Well, that’s really the case,” then it would believe [sic] to me, that if the city wanted to put out a bid for a logistical company that could meet the needs of the city and do so with whatever contractual ability they wanted to do it, they could hire one company, and that one company of course would cause far less emissions coming down the street, would not tear up the streets, would lower prices, and as a result, you would end up with a more favorable result for the city over the long haul.

Now, how long you have a contract is up to the city. If they don’t perform on the contract, you fire them and get somebody else. I mean, that’s sort of the way government could and should, and I imagine does, work, so again, my opinion is simply this. The City of Anoka could very easily move to one trash hauler, lower the price for everyone, save some of the streets, save some of the pollution, save some of the emissions, and save some of the noise. Thank you very much.

Mayor Rice

Thank you.

Barbara Baldwin, 3227 Sprague Avenue

3227 Sprague Avenue. It sounds like the Mayor and some of the folks here should have been at that meeting at Greenhaven because listening to what the Mayor says, he doesn't know what he's talking about. I was at that meeting. Changing to single hauler is governed by the state. We can't just go out and hire somebody or any of the other things that were just said. The state has a process that has to be followed, and one of the things that, if my accountant's brain remembers correctly, is that the initial contract with these haulers is going to be for seven years, which is a very long time to give something a try, because if there's something left out of that contract — which I happened to bring up because I'm in my 70s — and that was that haulers now will come up, get your trash can, take it down, empty it, and then bring it back for you. If that's not in there, then we're stuck for a long time.

And what does somebody like me do? So trying to go to a single hauler is not the simple thing that people seem to think it is. The slides show, and if we can get ahold of the audio and everything that was taped at that meeting, really is something that the Mayor and the rest of the City Council and the folks here should look at, because it's not a simple thing to do. It's not a simple thing to get out of once you do it, and it's very, very permanent for the first few years.

Mayor Rice

Thank you.

Kevin Landry, 765 East Main Street

I live at 765 East Main Street. My wife and I came back from vacation, and I had a flyer in the mail similar to that gentleman, about big government, and I'm going to be honest. To me, it's not about Ace Garbage or a single-hauler pick-up. To me, it's more about me being able to make a decision. There's no one up there that should ever have the right to tell me who I can and cannot choose to have anything done or picked up on my property. And I have to believe that everyone up there knows the mess St. Paul has gotten themselves into. City Council decided to do this on their own, had a contract signed, the citizens sued. A St. Paul circuit court judge agreed; St. Paul brought it to the Supreme Court; they lost. And now they're stuck with \$27.1 million of a five-year contract they cannot get out of.

Now, I'm respectfully telling you guys right now that if you guys choose to go and do this without a vote, I will bring this to court, period. St. Paul did us a favor. They kind of opened that door where the Supreme Court's saying people have to be able to vote on this, you know. Now, if this goes to a vote and I should lose, so be it. It went to a vote. And I — we spoke to a lot of people before this meeting, and that's kind of the argument, is we want to be able to vote on this. You know, you guys should not be making this decision for us. So thank you.

Mayor Rice

Sure. Step forward.

Male Speaker

Did anybody else have anything about the trash? Because I have a different topic.

Mayor Rice

Oh? Sure, go ahead.

[Multiple audience members speaking at once in background — inaudible.]

Mike Jellinger, 553 Harrison Street

So sorry to interrupt. I live at 553 Harrison Street in Anoka. I just wanted to make a couple comments. I got a mailer two years ago from Ace Waste Removal, or Ace Waste, saying they could do it for \$12 a month for a 96-gallon trash container, so I just wanted to kind of find out where the city was beginning with their negotiations, if they can negotiate a price better than what the individual can negotiate.

I guess I'm absolutely against this, mostly because if you're going to take all of that business and give it to one hauler, you're taking all that business away from multiple other haulers, and I feel that kind of oversteps City Council's charges, their duties. So I'm wondering, we have primaries on March 3rd. Will this be going to an election or to a ballot that everyone can vote on?

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

It would take a referendum, wouldn't it, Mr. Mayor?

Mayor Rice

It could, I think. That's one of the methods for that. Well, the comment I would make is that this is early in the argument or the debate, whatever word you'd like to use, and there is a process. The difficulty that St. Paul got into was that they did not follow that process. The bidding and those sorts of questions are up in the air. We don't know the answer to those questions because they are [inaudible].

Mike Jellinger

So it could be more than what we can get right now? As an individual, [inaudible]?

Mayor Rice

I'm sure it could be.

Mike Jellinger

Why would we do that?

Mayor Rice

Who knows what it could be?

Mike Jellinger

So the City Council — the city gets involved, and it costs the citizens more?

Mayor Rice

Well, the cost question is a difficult question, because what we're looking at are sometimes the differences between \$5 and \$15 a month on your waste bill, and then we're looking at citizens who are saying, "Yeah, but my street renewal cost me \$10,000."

Mike Jellinger

And the scale by which a street gets replaced is in the range of 30-plus years, so if we're going to have to wait that long to actualize any savings in the meantime —

Mayor Rice

Well, no, let me go further, because what I wanted to point out when Miss Thurston commented, typically, the assessment on a street is between 20 and 22 percent of the cost, leaving about 78 percent of the cost to be shared by all of the citizens of Anoka. And so the city as a whole, bears the burden for our infrastructure, and then we assess what we feel is fair and is of some representation of the benefit to that property. And so there are greater costs that we are all paying every month, every year for these functions that the city — as per our water and sewer and electric and —

Mike Jellinger

[Unintelligible] with our frost thaw cycle, over 30 years, we're thinking that the trash companies are — they do substantial enough damage to the roads that we need to switch to a single hauler?

Mayor Rice

I think the thought is that if garbage trucks are the —

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

Culprit.

Mayor Rice

— greatest variable that's controllable, then that is something that we should look at. I think that often, as the gentleman from Ace Waste suggested, we've often said school buses and garbage trucks, but, really, those are the vehicles that drive during weight restrictions. And most of the other heavy vehicles are restricted from driving during our roads' most vulnerable time. And so what we're looking at here is an attempt to control the costs that we can, and the first step is to find out what the truth is. And so we've got some ways to go to identify. We've been taught that garbage trucks are very destructive to the roads. And along with that, I think school buses come along that same vein. We need to get some numbers and statistics, and we need to get this stuff out to the public so that they can comment from — all from kind of the same understanding.

Mike Jellinger

I would agree. Has any negotiations been started with any of the haulers?

Mayor Rice

No.

Mike Jellinger

That's all I have. Thank you.

Mayor Rice

Yeah. Thank you.

John Hall, 1927 Branch Avenue

Hi. My name is John Hall, I live at 1927 Branch Avenue. I'm a retired fleet manager for the City of St. Paul. I worked with the City of St. Paul for 37 years. I have expertise with refuse vehicles. I've replaced many of them, installed refuse systems. I have an expertise with axle weights. I've studied them at the University of Minnesota on axle weights, and I've worked with MnDOT on axle weights. And, yes, refuse vehicles do work on your roads, but it's pretty minor.

My question is why do you want to open up this box and get into this quagmire? Why are you interested in this? It seems like you're early into this and to jump into this for something that's really, from the information that I've seen that you've looked at, is really not a whole heck of a lot. You're looking at a study. Unless you've got more information, I don't think that you've looked at very comprehensive studies, and the study that I've looked at that you've looked at, really isn't very relevant to what you're looking at. Unless you can come up with more a comprehensive study, I'd give up on this.

Now, if you think you can save the city money, I'm all for that. Now, I've been with ACE for a long time, and they've treated me well. If you people don't think you're getting a very good value, give them a call. I'm not advertising for them, but they've treated me real well, and I've been approached by other people, and I've given ACE a call and they've matched their dollars, and I've always been real well with them, and I've been treated by other vendors real well, and I don't think you're going to get that well. I've also very — had a lot of work with purchasing, and I know that the City of Anoka is held by what the State of Minnesota — the work under the same guidelines. I've got a lot of expertise with that in my years when I was working with the City of St. Paul, and I know that they're locked into the same principles, and they're going to have to go through an awful lot of — through that working with the single vendor, but they're going to have to go through this a lot, and I don't know why in the heck they'd want to jump through those hoops just for something that they think they might be able to save some money on their roads. But their roads are not under attack by garbage trucks.

As far as that goes, what are you going to do with your maintenance vehicles? They're probably doing more of your roads than a garbage truck because they're overweight too. When they're loaded with salt and sand, what are their weights? A lot of your trucks are single axles, they

don't have three. They have a single axle and an axle in the front. A lot of them aren't even a 20,000-pound front axle; they're 18,000-pound. They're probably doing more damage than the refuse truck. So why you're jumping through these hoops to look at what a garbage truck does? Well, I think you'd better re-look at what your information is or come up with better comprehensive studies to see what you're doing here. So I think you're putting a lot of effort into it. My real honest opinion, is I don't think you've put enough effort into it. That's my opinion. If I can be helpful, you've got my number; let me know. Thanks.

Mayor Rice

Thank you.

Mayor Rice

The question — the first question asked was why would you want to open this can of worms? And I think the answer to that one is 20-some odd years ago we started doing street renewal on an organized method, and at that time, we were replacing roads that were — some of them 80 years old, and now we're looking at roads that we did 30 years ago and saying, "These roads are in big trouble, and we need to start looking at how we're going to deal with this growing problem." And so that's our impetus towards saying, "What are we going to do to try to control the costs of street renewal?" Because we see that this happening at an accelerated rate to what it was —

John Hall

I have a large lot. My —

Mayor Rice

— 40 or 50 years ago.

John Hall

My road's been replaced on both sides, and it's really held up quite well, and it wasn't really all that bad to begin with on each side. I will say one thing, the craftsmanship on the sewer system has been replaced with the beehive-collection systems from the craftsmen from 100 years ago, and it's just truly amazing. [Unintelligible] a ten-year backhoe and tried to beat that thing to death, and he had no luck.

Mayor Rice

Thank you.

John Hall

Thank you.

Bruce Blahut, 3319 12th Avenue

I live at 3319 12th Avenue in Anoka. You talk about the damage to your roads. I replaced — I believe it was last summer — the street in front of my house. Within two weeks of that being completed, it cracked from curb to curb, and the guy in charge, when I pointed it out to him, said,

“Yeah, I’ll let them know.” There’s nobody been looked at it. The sewer across the street does not drain. You have more problems than garbage trucks. Thank you.

Mayor Rice

Thank you.

Charlie Mueliner, 220 McCann Avenue

I live at 220 McCann Avenue in Anoka. I’m always amazed that I’m one of the youngest people in these rooms. There’s a few young people, and I’m not even that young, but that’s just kind of an observation. So I’ve been kind of looking into this a bit, and like others, it seems like that study, and there’s other studies that contradict that — is there some damage from garbage trucks? Probably. You know, there’s probably some. I don’t know how quantifiable it is, and you can’t probably put a number on it, because it’s not an exact science to calculate it as of this time.

To me, I’m against this. I’m more of a free market — I think the free market works, and I think when the city gets involved, it becomes less efficient and more expensive, is my general — if you look at things that happen in the government, that’s what I see, but I think there — even if we don’t do this, if you want to help address and reduce the number of trucks, I think people can organize on a local level on your street and get people to — you know, and if you’re worried about some people paying way more and some people paying less, if the city wanted to distribute some information about how to negotiate with the companies, organize it in the neighborhood level — and the neighborhoods that want to do it will organize, and they’ll have one truck. We’ll have three trucks, because they’ll have yard waste, recycling, and garbage, but they’ll have less trucks. They can achieve that.

And I think most neighborhoods in Anoka, or at least the ones I’ve been in, people are pretty friendly with each other, although there’s probably exceptions to that. But, yeah, that’s my thought, is I think we should focus on, not — like you said, this is going to be a very difficult process and it’s very difficult to undo. I lived in Anoka with organized hauling for — or I lived I Blaine, that had organized hauling before I moved to Anoka six years ago. And I’ll tell you, the service I get here compared to there is night-and-day different. I don’t know what was in the contract; maybe we could do a better deal with the contract, but maybe we won’t. I don’t know, but we had — if you overfilled your can this much, they’d send you a letter saying, “You can’t do that.” They’d write on there three feet apart. You had to have your cans three feet apart. These guys in Anoka, they’ll — they go above and beyond to do it, because they know there’s five other companies beating down the door and coming to your door every spring. They actually come to my neighborhood every spring, two or three companies, and offer you something. And you can take them if you’re not happy with your service, or you can just call the company you’re happy with and say, “Will you beat this price?” and they do it. It’s not a very difficult process. I just don’t see the benefit in doing it, and I don’t feel like the data is quantifiable to justify the city’s effort.

The other thing that’s an unknown is the cost to the city. I think if you’re going to get serious

about this, you need to present us with, “We’re going to have to have one admin staff. This is the yearly recurring cost to the city for going through with this proposal,” and I also agree we should have a vote on that and have all the information available to us so that we can make the decision. So thank you.

Mayor Rice

Thanks.

[Laughter]

Councilmember Erik Skogquist

You picked a bad night; sorry.

Andrew Groninger, 2333 4th Avenue

Good evening, Mayor, Councilmembers. I live at 2333 Fourth Avenue in Anoka. So I’ve heard a lot of questions here about, you know, what’s this going to cost, what it’s not going to cost, and I understand you guys aren’t in a position to answer that right now because it’s not official. But there is kind of a single hauler that happens right now. Isn’t the city’s recycling program essentially a single-hauler type program? So if we look at this from the lens of that, how often do you guys review costs, and price and what is the contract negotiation terms and time period like for that? What do you do to control costs with that? Because that is a very comparable piece of work that the city is probably doing for the citizens.

Mayor Rice

Pam?

Councilmember Erik Skogquist

Is Pam in the room?

Mayor Rice

Oh, she is. Good.

Andrew Groninger

[Unintelligible] and what sort of cost controls and comparisons are you doing? What sort of cost controls, comparisons? Do you just take another bid every five years?

Pam [off-mike]

[Inaudible]

Andrew Groninger

Okay, and in that time period, how often has the price gone down?

Pam [off-mike]

Inaudible

Andrew Groninger

The price has never gone down.

Councilmember Erik Skogquist

Probably not, yeah.

Andrew Groninger

Okay. All right. So this is kind of what my concern here is. I don't know if you guys looked around at some of the companies around here, but when I saw this initially, the first thing that I did was compare it to this particular piece of services provided by Anoka, right? What I found is that Republic Services has actually got probably the worst customer reviews on the Internet out of any of the companies that are available for me here. When I looked at them initially, I also found that they were one of the more expensive ones. It's not the company that I went with as my waste hauler, and I'm a little concerned that if we go to single hauler, everybody in the city is going to be in that situation where they might end up with the guy who actually has the worst customer service but he put the best bid in, right?

So based on things like that, I really do believe that the free market does work, and I think that the city is going to have a slightly different criteria for what they're going to select a waste hauler for, than I would. For instance, let's say we put this into play and we select, I don't know, ACE — ACE would be fine. Not that I have any issues with ACE, but my question would be who's going to come wash my garbage can every year?

Councilmember Erik Skogquist

They wash —

Andrew Groninger

Yeah, wash.

Councilmember Erik Skogquist

Okay.

Andrew Groninger

Yeah, who's going to come wash my garbage can every year?

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

I do it myself.

Mayor Rice

Yeah, I do too.

Andrew Groninger

You do it yourself?

Male Speaker

Yeah.

Andrew Groninger

My hauler does it for me every year, free of charge.

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

I know, and it's ridiculous. You know, do it yourself.

Andrew Groninger

You like to wash your garbage can? Is that what you're telling me?

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

Well, yeah, it needs it more than once a year.

Andrew Groninger

It sure does.

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

I like the hose; I like to spray things.

Andrew Groninger

So you do like to wash your garbage can?

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

Huh?

Andrew Groninger

So you think that, you know, the fact that my hauler doing this for me as a free service is totally unnecessary and that's something that a hauler shouldn't provide? The city would never consider giving me better service than what I get right now, or even equivalent service to what I get right now.

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

If you leave it up to your hauler to wash your can once a year, you're not doing your neighbors a favor, because it's going to stink.

Andrew Groninger

Well, you can come over and take a look at my can and tell me if it's clean, if you want. You've got my address.

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

What do you want me to look at?

Mayor Rice

Hold on. Hold on. If we get into a dialogue like this all night long, we will literally be here until 2:00 in the morning, and so —

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

Then let's wrap it up.

Andrew Groninger

Absolutely. My point here is that, quite frankly, I kind of think this is a little bit beyond what you guys really need to be looking at here. I've heard this argument tonight, and basically it seems like two arguments are for potentially maybe we can save money. Not real sold on that based on the fact that the single-carrier thing that you've done so far has not saved any money.

Mayor Rice

Let me — I wanted to address that, and I was going to wait until you were done, but since you brought that as the first point, recycling is a difficult one to compare it to. First of all, because not every company has the facilities to deliver for the city on a scale like this. Secondly, five years ago, ten years ago, recycling — there was actually a market for recycling, and so in today's market, we've lost a lot of that. And so naturally the price goes up when they can't sell their aluminum and their paper and their plastics and those sorts of things that they could in years gone by. And so it's just a — it's a little bit more of a difficult argument to make, saying, well, the price has gone up. Well, yeah, of course they have, but there may be other factors that we're not able to compare apples to apples on.

Andrew Groninger

All right. Fair enough. Unfortunately, you know, if you have a better comparison — that really is the best one I could come up with.

Mayor Rice

Yeah. Well, I think the other — the better comparison is to look at other cities that are doing single hauler and look at their costs and look at their customer satisfaction, and that's one that we will have to do as we move forward.

Andrew Groninger

Absolutely. That would be great. Absolutely. The other piece that I hear out here is this whole thing about the roads, which in some ways, I'm kind of glad to hear this being talked about, because I've had a lot of work done on my road, and where I live, it's a pretty high-traffic road. I've lived in another city on a really high-traffic road, and, honestly, I'm pretty confident of the difference between those two cities and how frequently — because my roads were repaired a lot less in the other city. It has nothing to do with what vehicles drive down that road, because I had 18-wheelers coming down my road in the other city, which had a different type of surface on it — not asphalt — and if you guys really want to fix the road surfacing thing, you may possibly want to look into some different materials to put on the roads here, and I think that would give

you some longer life as opposed to looking at whether or not garbage trucks being there — 50 percent less, 60 percent, 70 percent less are going to resolve the issue for you.

As you may have guessed, I'm not a big fan of this idea, so I do hope that you'll put it up for a vote, because I think that would be the right thing to do, and let the citizens make the decision.

Mayor Rice

Thank you.

Andrew Groninger

Thank you.

Sarah Gall, 1811 2nd Avenue

I live at 1811 Second Avenue, and probably a little out of touch as a mom, so I don't really get on Facebook, honestly, all that much or see the board or anything, so when I got the flyer in the mail from ACE, it was really the first information that I had about the single hauler. And so, you know, it came to me, and it had "big government" and these words which made me naturally want to look for myself to see if the information is correct or just kind of get a better picture.

So I've spent the last few days talking to about five different carriers. I talked to the Communications Director at Champlin and at Blaine, had them look over their contracts with me and just give me some of the details and specifics so that I could really get a picture of kind of all the different points, like the truck-on-the-road damage and other large vehicles, buses. I called Metro Transit and had their maintenance department give me the weights of the different buses fully loaded and unloaded, so, you know, and we've discussed that. But just, I guess, really kind of to reiterate perhaps some of the other points, to really get a good look at more information than just one set of facts that's handed to you, because it might not be legitimate, and that's maybe what I'm finding, is that the information that was presented at those meetings was not legitimate.

And, yeah, I mean, I've talked to the dump site in Elk River and got the weight of a truck unloaded and a truck as it sat on their with eight tons of garbage, and it certainly doesn't add up to the 90,000. That truck at 8 tons weighs 55,000, and it was a really large truck. So anyways, just kind of to reiterate that point to perhaps get a better idea of that. But, truthfully, I'm not for it, and for some of the reasons that were aforementioned, the free market and feeling like, you know, as a citizen, I would like a choice. And my husband is a business owner, and so, kind of to put it in perspective like that, if the city started — I know it feels like this big government discussion, but if the city started dictating these things, where does that stop? And it doesn't — it just doesn't feel like something that perhaps needs to be on the agenda or done for us.

And then the last piece is just something when I was speaking with the Communications Director of the Blaine Utilities Department, and he was reviewing their contract information with me. He expressed concern, actually, for a large community trying to implement a single hauler. He said that when Blaine was incorporated in 1964, they ran their own system, and then cost wasn't

effective for them, so they switched to doing a single hauler with a private company in 1970 and have reviewed contracts at five-year intervals ever since. And so, yeah, he really expressed concern that that probably wouldn't be that helpful or effective, or there's just a lot of pieces that have to fall in line for that to work.

And also the last piece is there's just a lot of city subsidizing, and I got that a lot from Champlin when I spoke to the Utilities Director there, and she went over the [unintelligible], I guess, from Blaine too. There's a lot of city subsidizing for the process, and so I don't really know that it is a cost savings for us. It's kind of presented as a cost savings too, and I feel like it's both taking my freedom and the freedom of the free market and those companies to do their thing as well as costing me more in the long run. So thank you.

Mayor Rice

Thank you.

Ross Peters, 4309 Parkview Circle

4309 Parkview Circle, here in Anoka. I'm part of the Rum River Shores Association, a board member. I'm on here with two parts now, one for the trash, because I didn't know about it until I got the flyer either. Part of our association — our association dues include trash removal. We have 111 houses, and we write contracts every two to three years. Our contract is going to be up by the end of 2020. If we renew our contract and have our homeowners pay their association dues and the board or the Council goes ahead and goes to a single hauler, will the association then be forced to move to the city's plan, or will we — if we're on a single — or a different hauler than what the city decides?

Mayor Rice

That's a very good question. I would assume that if you're a single hauler, that would hold, but I don't know that. We'd sort through that at —

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

I can't see changing what you had done if it was working.

Ross Peters

So, then, would that perpetually be a standard, that our association would then not have to abide by the city's single hauler?

Mayor Rice

[Inaudible] farther down the road then we are and so —

Ross Peters

Yeah, and just, like I said, just —

Mayor Rice

— we would negotiate with you on that. I'm sure the city would discuss that with the

association and come to some agreement. Whether that would be — probably what would happen is the association would talk with the city and see what are you paying per driveway, and then we would just negotiate that out, I would suspect. And if you're getting a more favorable bid, then I don't know. I don't see why — if you're having single hauler, why that would be a problem, but —

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

If they're locked into a contract, they couldn't get out of it.

Mayor Rice

Right.

Ross Peters

The real question why I was here was I was not able to attend last month's meeting. We actually had our association board meeting at the same time. But I talked to Mr. Borglund before the meeting, and he said that you were going to have a first reading of the 14.2 acres of Bunker Lake and Seventh Avenue and that you guys were in discussions of selling that to Ryan Development, with the intentions of putting together a 50,000-square foot grocery store anchor. Is that correct — with potential — outlet mall, or —

Mayor Rice

Right.

Ross Peters

— not outlet mall, but —

Councilmember Erik Skogquist

Retail with it.

Ross Peters

Retail, things like that. I went door to door and some of our homeowners are here who face the south side of that lot, and their view is that cornfield or empty lot right now. Is the city going to take into consideration the aesthetic problem that's going to come — arise if you guys put a giant brick masonry building along the backside of that fence? And, if so, is there anything that you guys are willing to work with us as far as like light pollution, with things like that, and the increased potential vandalism that we have received over the last three years since the community has been fully developed?

Mayor Rice

All of the above. There will be landscaping plans that would buffer, and there will be berming and that sort of thing that would buffer. There will be —

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

Lighting diffusion.

Mayor Rice

Sure. There are all kinds of scientific studies of lighting and how that is directed and where it goes so that it doesn't pollute the neighborhood. And then building standards that would have to be met, so there will be a lot of different protections that the neighborhood is afforded.

Councilmember Erik Skogquist

Mr. Mayor, just to add onto that too, kind of we're at the point of basically an agreement with them to start marketing and whatnot. Once they kind of come up with it, possibly an anchor tenant or something like that, that's kind of when they come back to us. Since we're the landowner, we have a lot of say in what happens there, and that's when they'll say this is a proposal or the plan, and then we get to work with them on a lot of those details. And during that whole discussion, when that stuff happens, we'll make sure that notifications go out to neighbors, and so you guys are always kind of going to be aware when we're discussing those things and basically you'll have a point of view on a lot of it. And, you know, it is going to be a commercial corner, so I know everybody understands that, but we try to make it as attractive as we can and work as best with all the investment you guys have put in there as well.

Ross Peters

Okay. That's all I had. Thank you, Mr. Mayor and Councilmembers.

Mayor Rice

Thank you.

Male Speaker

[Inaudible] a couple comments.

Barbara Baldwin

So just to pick up a couple of things as I've heard things. To the gentleman's questions, since this, going to the organized trash, is governed by state law, whether they will be able to stay on their organized trash or not is going to depend on what state law says. So there isn't probably anything the city's going to be able to do to it if it's addressed in the state law.

Greg Lee, during his presentation at Evergreen — or at the golf course — said that in the past 20 years, the city has spent \$42 million on street improvements. My accountant's brain says that's \$2 million a year over 20 years, which isn't a particularly large amount of money. Our street, Sprague, was repaved ten years ago, and if you drive down it, our whole two-blocks long, you will find that it is in just about as good condition as it was when it was repaved ten years ago. The trash trucks really haven't done it very much damage.

To our lady who's talking about what they were assessed for having their street repaved, she needs to understand that that probably also had sewer and other underground things in the cost. It wasn't just the paving of the street; it was a lot of other things. So when you look at \$5,000 or \$7,000, yes, I agree that's a lot of money, but it isn't just the street being re-tarred. It's the —

Mayor Rice

All of the above.

Barbara Baldwin

— all of the stuff underneath that gets replaced every 50,60, 70 years. I have one more thing I wanted to bring up, and now it's slipping my mind. If I can't remember, I suppose I can't say it.

Mayor Rice

The per-year budget is one that I would want to address, though, because I think initially our budget was about a million dollars a year, and then, I don't know, can you quote off the top of your head what our budget is for street renewal this year, Mr. Mayor?

City Engineering Technician Ben Nelson

This year we'll be spending \$8.2 million on our street projects.

Barbara Baldwin

For how many miles?

City Engineering Technician Ben Nelson

3.5 — 4 — right around five miles.

Barbara Baldwin

So a little over a million dollars a mile?

City Engineering Technician Ben Nelson

That depends on what program it is.

Barbara Baldwin

Is that replacing the stuff under the street or just the street?

City Engineering Technician Ben Nelson

It depends on the street project it is. We have two different programs it addresses — if a structure on two of them and street service on one of them.

Mayor Phil Rice

Anyway, the point was just that the budget has changed and streets are becoming more and more expensive, just like a gallon of milk is becoming more and more expensive. And so to compare that over the 20-year span, really it's an incremental growth, and at the same, time, it seems that we're having to look at it more frequently than we had in the past, and so those are the figures that are concerning, and so, then, that's what has us looking for some solution or solutions to try to help us with that — to try to contain those costs.

Barbara Baldwin

Well, part of it too is that if you did the street 30 years ago and you're going to do the street now, when they did Sprague, our houses are in the vicinity of 50 years old, we're mid- '60s. So we're in the vicinity of 50 years old, and they said that all of our underground was fine. And so they just did the blacktop. So if we did all of the underground 30 years ago, when we redo that street, we are probably not going to redo sewers and water and all of the other things. We are just going to do what happened with Sprague.

Mayor Rice

Those are the two programs that Ben was alluding to. One is all of the infrastructure and everything and reconstruction, and then the other one is the road's surface. And so there are two different programs.

Barbara Baldwin

But if anybody's interested in seeing what a street looks like ten years later, drive down Sprague. Like I said, we're a whole two blocks long, so it's not going to take you more than minute, and you can see what it looks like. And we have a number of different haulers.

Oh, I know what I was going to say — you know, when you get into your 70s, sometimes it's a little slower — when I moved here in 2005, the city asked me, "Who do you want for your trash hauler?" and, I don't know, the people that lived there before, there were cans, I took whatever they had. And I was billed for my trash on my utility bill. Time went on, my utility bills seemed to get high, I pulled out old utility bills. At that point, I had Republic. They had doubled my trash fee without ever bothering to notify me. It's just like, "Ah, we're just going to add to it." So I found another hauler, because, like we were saying, we can always find a hauler that's cheaper. And I found one that was much nicer.

And when I called the city to say, "I'm changing from A to B," they said, "You can't have it on your utility bill anymore." So it seems that the city has been getting out of this business, so I don't think Accounting, having been an accountant for half a century, is going to be real happy to have this come back to them. It's going to mean additional personnel. It's going to be additional software. There's a lot. I mean, I've done this for a long time. I don't know — now I lost the other part —

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

Barb, there is — we got rid of the bookkeeping. We were doing the bookkeeping for garbage companies, which made absolutely no sense.

Barbara Baldwin

And you'll be doing it again if you go to unified hauling, because it's going to bill on your utility bill because you can't have them billing everybody, because then people aren't going to pay and et cetera, et cetera, so it's going to have to be a unified billing as well as pickup if you're going to go to that.

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

I don't know that.

Barbara Baldwin

So anyway, the stray things that I heard along —

Mayor Rice

Very good. Thank you.

Barbara Baldwin

So a couple of years ago when I had the rotator cuff surgery and I had my arm lashed to my body so that it couldn't move, I called my hauler, which happens to be Curbside, and said, "You know, I'm having this surgery and I'm not going to be able to handle that can, getting it down." So they very kindly came up and got my trash and everything. I called Republic, and I couldn't get any response, and Pam can tell you, I finally had to call Pam Bowman, and she had to call them to get them to do what they needed to do as far as getting my recycling down for me, because I'm not their customer, so I don't count.

Mary Jo Davich, 1711 Levee Avenue

I almost forgot about this meeting. I live at 1711 Levee Avenue in Anoka. I'm born and raised in Anoka. Mark knows me. Mayor Rice, you're married to a relative of mine. First of all, I want to know why government is involved in my garbage hauling. First of all, we have a free market economy and I think it's unacceptable, unconscionable that you're even worried about it, and another thing is if you have this waste company that's doing the recycling pick-up, why are you negotiating every five years? Why isn't it every year? I mean, why did they come up with a five-year contract? So anyway, the point I want to make is that it's not government's role to decide who picks up my garbage. That's it.

Mike Cofrin, 1614 Rivers Point Court

I live at 1614 Rivers Point Court in Anoka, and this has been quite an education. I came in here as a staunch — staunchly in favor of a single hauler, and, in truth, I still am in favor of the idea, but the idea now comes with conditions. The idea would be — it would have to be a well-managed process and a really good RFP process and short enough contracts so that we can get out of them if it wasn't working. It would include — I think all the conditions would have to be favorable that would support everything that people at a base level oppose about the non-free market nature of a single hauler.

But at the same time, you know, I live about five blocks from where I work, and so on my way to work today, I just counted the number of different brands of trash cans, and there are six different cans. And that meant there were six different trucks. And then I work — I live on the corner — I work on the corner of Monroe and Fifth, and I just counted the number of trucks that went by during the half of the day that I was there. There's six or seven trucks that came by, so it's not just one truck passing once. Sometimes they're zig-zagging throughout the city.

So I guess my point is I favor the idea and concept, and I think that if you do a good enough — if you can manage this without encumbrances of state law and encumbrances of a contract that would be poorly negotiated, I think it's a good idea, but if we can't somehow manage a contract life with our hauler or haulers, then the free market is probably the best approach.

Mayor Phil Rice

Thank you.

Male Speaker

I want to clarify — that's come up two or three times that people want us to be able to have a say in the term of the contract, and we don't — we can't have a say in the term of the contract, per that open house. It's a seven-year term, minimum, per state law. Is that correct?

Mayor Rice

That's initial. That's the transition. After that, then it will be up to us all to decide how frequently that happens.

Male Speaker

So the initial contract has to be seven years. Thereafter, is there a state law?

Mayor Rice

The initial process of developing from open to single hauler is mandated by state law to take us seven years, yes.

Male Speaker

Okay. All right. It's a little unclear to me still.

Mayor Rice

Yeah. So following that, then, the term would be decided according to our desires for accountability, for competition, and for customer service, and those sorts of things that we value in the free market. It would be free market but just done on an RFP, and so for the whole city instead of for each address. Councilmember Freeburg?

Councilmember Mark Freeburg

Thank you. It's getting late, and we haven't even started regular business, but I do — I wanted to just say thank you for coming forward, and I also want to let you know I'm a free market guy myself, and nobody wants to force government in your garbage business. And I also would like to have the community vote on it and let you folks — it's your town and your roads, and you're the ones that have to pay to get them fixed up.

And weight does affect roads. If it didn't, they wouldn't have weight restrictions in the springtime, and when I grew up in Anoka, there weren't school buses on Oakwood Drive because everybody walked to junior high, senior high, and the Lincoln School, and everybody walked to Washington Elementary, and there weren't school buses. They were for people out on

Dayton Road that got bussed in. Now, there's tons of school buses, tons of trucks, FedEx, you've got all sorts of big vehicles, and they're all wearing on the roads. And we as a city are just looking probably at the low-hanging fruit to pick, because garbage trucks do not have weight restrictions, if I'm not mistaken, so they get to play by different rules.

But at the end of the day, I would just as soon have you folks pick what you want to do, because, like I say, right now we don't even charge for mill and overlay. You know, we redo all of Sunny Acres this spring for no charge, no assessment. That will have to end the next time around. We've been blessed with reserves, we've been blessed with electric utility, and we've been blessed with funds that we could pull this off, but on Oakwood Drive, the road I live on, it was done about eight, nine years ago, and there's cracks and fissures and all sorts of stuff going on there. And I don't want to get into an argument with anybody. It's just a fact, and so if we could get organized and do a referendum and let you folks decide how you want to run your town, have at it, because I don't want to get in an argument with you guys. It's just not worth it. It's your town, and I'll do what you want.

Mayor Rice

Councilmember Barnett?

Councilmember Elizabeth Barnett

Scott Baumgartner, our City Attorney, can you speak to what the process is? I know that for those in attendance tonight that were at the Thursday meeting about organized garbage hauling, there was some pages in the PowerPoint presentation that deemed citizen action, so if the Council does not choose to consider organized hauling and you disagree with that or vice versa, kind of maybe laying out the process. And then I do want to let everyone know too that the presentation, in its slightly altered state from years ago, the presentation is available online at Anoka City Hall as well — or Anoka City Council. But, Scott, maybe if you can talk about that a little bit so we understand if we can put it to a vote or if they have to after we make a decision.

City Attorney Scott Baumgartner

Well, there's two different processes under the charter, and if anybody's interested, it's under the city charter. The city charter is online on Anoka's webpage, if you ever want to read that. I apologize, I don't know exactly which section. I think it's in Section 5, 6, right in that area.

Two different processes. There's something called an initiative, which would be a group of voters that organize, and there's certain requirements as far as the numerical number of voters, registered voters that have to come forward to bring that forward as kind of the committee that's going to sponsor moving something forward. So, say, for instance, there's a group of voters that wanted to have single hauling and the city wasn't doing anything. If they wanted to bring that forward, there's a certain number of voters required to bring that forward to force the issue into a vote. That's the initiative.

There's also something called a referendum, which is if you as a council pass an ordinance dealing with the topic — let's use single haulers — and there's a group of registered voters that

disagree with that ordinance, there's a period of time within which they again can organize, and it takes a certain number of registered voters based upon the last year's election numbers. They have a petition, they have to have so many signatures on the petition. If they achieve the certain number of signatures on that petition, they can then call for a referendum, which means that it would then have to go to a vote as well.

So two different processes, one initiates if the council does nothing and there's a group of individuals or voters that want to start something, and then a referendum if there's a group of voters that want to prevent something that the council decides on going forward. And again, they're both in the charter. I don't have all of that off the top of my head, but it's in there.

Councilmember Elizabeth Barnett

Thank you.

City Attorney Scott Baumgartner

Sure.

Councilmember Erik Skogquist

Just going down the line [inaudible].

Mayor Rice

All right. I'm going to say it. I don't want to say it, but I'm going to say it. Open forum is still open if there's anyone that would like to speak to Council on any item that's not found later in the agenda.

Seeing none, I'm going to move on in the agenda.

[END OF DISCUSSION]

Njo-2/10/2020