

AGENDA



Thursday, January 15, 2009

**Solid Waste Services
RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNCIL ACTION****Item No. 50**

Subject: Approve a resolution adopting the Zero Waste Strategic Plan.

Fiscal Note: There is no unanticipated fiscal impact at this time. A fiscal note is not required.

For More Information: Jessica Kingpetcharat, SWS, 974-7678; Tammie Williamson, SWS, 974-1997; or William E. Rhodes, P.E., 974-1970

Boards and Commission Action: Recommended by Solid Waste Advisory Commission, with additional comments and priorities.

BACKGROUND

Consistent with its goal to make Austin the most livable city in the country, in May 2005, the Austin City Council adopted resolution 20050519-44 supporting the United Nations Environmental Accord and committing itself to achieving a 20% reduction in per capita solid waste disposal to landfills and incinerators by 2012, and Zero Waste to landfills and incinerators by 2040. In 2007, the City hired Gary Liss and Associates to work with community members and develop a Zero Waste Strategic Plan. (See Attachment A)

WHAT IS ZERO WASTE?

Zero Waste is an ambitious goal to divert 90% of waste from landfills and incinerators by 2040 using a “whole system” approach to evaluate and manage the flow of resources and waste created by our communities. Zero Waste encourages communities to RETHINK their waste streams, REDUCE their use of materials as much as possible, and then REUSE and RECYCLE remaining materials. Zero Waste also acknowledges that there will generally be approximately 10% of residual waste to manage and, therefore, advocates for redesigning products to shift the responsibility of recycling, reuse, or disposal from local governments to manufacturers.

WHY ZERO WASTE?

Austin is part of a regional waste management system. Three of the four landfills located within the Capital Area Planning Council of Governments (CAPCOG) region are privately owned and accept waste from nearly 33 surrounding counties. As the Capital Area continually grows, outpacing other Texas communities, the region will be faced with a need to expand existing landfills, open new landfills, or divert a drastic amount of waste from current landfills to properly ensure the health and safety of the region. Austin’s Zero Waste Plan seeks to extend the life of existing landfills while acknowledging that a certain amount of residual waste is inevitable.

SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Solid Waste Advisory Commission met four times to discuss and thoughtfully consider written and verbal input regarding the Zero Waste Strategic Plan. On November 25, 2008, the SWAC recommended adoption of the plan and clarified certain concerns. (See Attachment B) In addition, the SWAC made 13 specific recommendations to be implemented, four of which were given top priority.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adopting the Zero Waste Strategic Plan and the SWAC's recommendations with staff's suggested revisions, recognizing that all recommendations will likely necessitate changes to rules, ordinances, and/or policies, and will further require collaborating with key stakeholders to ensure successful implementation.