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News Release

Cities of Arkansas City, Winfield working jointly to save recycling

Cities notified March 1 of substantial rate increase from Waste Connections

STROTHER FIELD, Kan. (March 20, 2019) — The Cities of Arkansas City and Winfield are working diligently and jointly to save their cooperative recycling program after notification of a large rate increase.

The cities were notified Feb. 28 by Waste Connections that their recycling rates were going up substantially, effective March 1. Due to the timing of the notice, the 2019 budgets did not account for this.

Currently, the cities are paid \$21 per ton of recyclable materials. This is part of a 60-percent rebate program through the OBM Chicago Midwest Stock Market. But Waste Connections now will charge the cities \$120 per ton of recyclable materials — an effective increase of \$141 per ton with the loss of rebate.

In addition, the current hauling rate of \$408 per haul will be increased to \$475 per haul. This charge is incurred an average of eight times per month, according to the City of Winfield's hauling statistics.

Using estimates from 2018 total year tonnage, which was 1,009 tons of recycling between the two cities, the cities' staff estimated their annual total cost of recycling could increase by nearly \$150,000.

Both cities are committed to working together to find a solution to maintain their popular recycling programs, but this will include having to look into a rate increase to cover the cost of recycling services.

"Unfortunately, we found that our situation is not unique," said Nick Hernandez, city manager of Arkansas City. "Municipalities all over our region and the country are dealing with the same situation."

The market for recycled materials has been impacted substantially by changes in the amount of recyclables going to China. As a result, there is little, if any, market for many of these recyclable materials at this time.

"From our research, we found that other facilities that would accept our recycling stream are at similar rates to those being implemented by Waste Connections," said Brenda Peters, interim city manager of Winfield.

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On Sept. 5, 1995, the cities of Arkansas City and Winfield entered into an interlocal agreement for the construction of a new recycling center. Strother Field, which is jointly operated by and located midway between the two cities, was selected as the site for the joint recycling center.

A grand opening of the new jointly operated recycling center was held on Nov. 15, 1997, in conjunction with "America Recycling Day." The cities annually review and approve the operations of the center, with all net operational costs (all expenses, less any revenues) divided equally between them.

While the cities continue to research sustainable ways to continue their current recycling efforts in the most fair and equitable manner possible, they also have contacted Waste Connections to request that the existing rates stay in place for 60 days, until May 1, to provide more time to consider changes.

Additionally, they have asked for a proposal for a longer-term contract that would specify the rate structure and necessary notification time frames for any future rate changes.

About recycling in Arkansas City

The City of Arkansas City operates three large recycling trailers for the benefit of its citizens. All three trailers are transported to the joint recycling center and dumped on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Two of these are 18-cubic-yard recycling trailers, both of which quickly fill up after being dumped three times a week. One, an orange trailer with a Cowley College logo, is located in the Cowley College parking lot southwest of the intersection of Central Avenue and First Street. The other, a "classic" green recycling trailer, resides in the parking lot at Spring Hill Golf Course, located at 3202 N. Summit St.

The City's newest recycling trailer is now open for business in Arkansas City Middle School's east parking lot, just north of the Kansas Avenue overpass. It can be accessed from the circle drive off Kansas Avenue. This brand-new 25-cubic-yard trailer, which is painted purple and adorned with a Sally the Bulldog logo, is larger than the other two trailers. It was purchased in 2018 through a state grant.

The recycling of solid waste continues to increase in popularity each year in Arkansas City, from 273,124 pounds in 2014 and 526,348 pounds in 2015 to 611,191 pounds in 2016 and 731,430 pounds in 2017. In 2018, public recycling in Arkansas City topped 800,000 pounds for the first time, even though the newest and largest trailer was only in operation for slightly more than two months at the end of 2018.

Also in 2018, public recycling in the cities of Arkansas City and Winfield hit a new record high, with a grand total of 1,009 tons of recycled materials that were diverted out of the Cowley County Landfill.

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