





**COUNCIL PRESIDENT SEAN ELO-RIVERA**  
**City of San Diego**  
**Ninth District**

**COUNCILMEMBER JOE LACAVA**  
**City of San Diego**  
**First District**

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: December 16, 2022

TO: Mayor Todd Gloria

FROM: Council President Sean Elo-Rivera, Ninth District   
Councilmember Joe LaCava, First District 

SUBJECT: Solid Waste Management Services and Cost Recovery Implementation Priorities

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In 2021, we initiated an effort to amend the People's Ordinance, Municipal Code §66.0127, and allow for cost recovery for City of San Diego (City) provided solid waste management services. As concluded by three separate San Diego County Grand Juries and the City's Independent Budget Analyst, the People's Ordinance was inequitable, environmentally unsustainable, and fiscally irresponsible. In an era of climate change and increased demands for equitable public services, we resolved that it was time to ask voters to address the impacts of the People's Ordinance.

Measure B was placed on the November ballot and was passed by a majority vote. It is now prudent for the City to study and plan for the enhancement of solid waste management services and the implementation of cost recovery.

This memorandum respectfully communicates our priorities for that implementation.

## **Community Engagement**

Thorough and meaningful community engagement is our number one priority. Enhancing solid waste management services and implementing cost recovery will be the most significant change to public services in San Diego in decades. Resident and stakeholder involvement are critical to the development and implementation of enhanced services, cost recovery, and potential assistance programs. The first step must be educating the public on what services are necessary and what services are possible. The City must be clear and transparent on what users want and before the initiation of a cost of service study.

We request that the necessary resources for Environmental Services Department (ESD,) and other departments, to conduct robust community engagement around our waste system, possible enhanced services, cost recovery, and potential assistance programs is considered in the Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Budget (Budget). We commit to doing the same in our Budget Priorities Memoranda.

Service enhancements and/or cost recovery will likely impact the working conditions of City employees represented by San Diego Municipal Employees Association (MEA) and American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 127. Their needs and perspectives must also be incorporated in the process and ultimately factored into a cost of service study.

Public engagement is an operational function and we defer to and support you and your team's expertise. We request that a community engagement plan is developed and presented to City Council as an initial step in this process. Elements may include:

- Method – all methods for outreach should be considered, including virtual and in-person community meetings; online surveys; mailings; and engaging and contracting with community-based organizations to conduct outreach to their constituencies.
- Interest – Engage all impacted constituencies to include service recipients, environmental groups, and employees. Methods should be tailored to their unique role and experience.
- Location – Engage within each Council District and Communities of Concerns, as well as in the workplaces of impacted MEA and AFSCME Local 127 employees.

We look forward to informing community engagement efforts; supporting those efforts in our respective Council Districts and encouraging our colleagues to do the same; and assisting with necessary policy and budgetary decisions at City Council.

## **Cost of Service Study**

A cost of service study (COSS) is a necessary and mandatory step for implementing cost recovery for solid waste management services. It must be both broad and thorough.

The passage of Measure B unties the City's hands to improve public services, advance equity, and budget responsibly. We acknowledge that a fee for City-provided waste management services may create hardships, particularly for low-income homeowners and seniors living on fixed incomes. In parallel to the COSS, we request that the City work with the City Attorney's Office to develop proposals for programs or services that support residents who may struggle with a fee.

The People's Ordinance allowed some ineligible properties to receive waste management services from the City at no cost like short-term vacation rentals and "mini-dorms." We further request that staff explore the feasibility of phasing in cost recovery, beginning with such properties.

The COSS scope should consider currently offered services; required services, like SB 1383-required organic waste collection; and stakeholder and resident desired services as determined through Community Engagement. The COSS should also contemplate mechanisms to reduce litter and improve general community cleanliness. The COSS must support and implement the City's Climate Action Plan.

Please further consider:

- Including waste containers and container delivery in the cost of service
- Increased bulky item pickup and community clean-ups/recycling
- Weekly residential recycling collection
- Assistance programs for residents physically unable to transport waste containers to the curb or alleyway
- Pay-as-You-Throw versus flat fees

We again request and support that ESD has the resources necessary in the Budget to initiate a broad and thorough COSS. We commit to doing the same in our Budget Priorities Memoranda.

### **Timeline**

Improving waste management services and implementing cost recovery will be the most significant change in public services in recent memory. We must take the needed time to prepare and plan for the best possible waste system before cost recovery is implemented, especially when considering our CAP and equity goals. Due to the critical need to hear from stakeholders and residents prior to service change, and in addition to identifying and securing the required resources needed to make said feedback robust, we request resources be identified for this process in the Budget.

We acknowledge the amount of work necessary required for success and that this effort falls onto our operations teams. We are here to offer support. We greatly appreciate everyone's time and dedication to this issue and will work collaboratively in what is a historic moment in City history.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

CC: Paola Avila, Chief of Staff, Office of Mayor Todd Gloria  
Jessica Lawrence, Director of Policy, Office of Mayor Todd Gloria  
Randy Wilde, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Mayor Todd Gloria  
Eric Dargan, Chief Operating Officer  
Kris McFadden, Deputy Chief Operating Officer  
Matt Vespi, Chief Financial Officer  
Renee Robertson, Director, Environmental Services Department

Charles Modica, Independent Budget Analyst  
Jordan More, Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Office of the Independent Budget Analyst