

Mayor Holic and Council Members,

The seven-member Solid Waste--Recycling Rate Stakeholder's Work Group convened its first meeting on April 7, 2016. Over the next twelve months the group held twelve meetings lasting between 1½ and 2 hours.

Additionally, time was spent by members reviewing the 2013 reports submitted by Kessler Consulting, talking with Venice residents, the staff of solid waste--recycling and personnel in the Venice City finance department.

The proposed fee schedule, submitted under separate cover, is a culmination of the committee's efforts.

The members of the committee extend thanks to Linda Senne, Director of Finance and Joe Welch, Controller. We want to convey a special note of appreciation to Joe for his excellent analysis of the data from the Kessler Study and the projected financial requirements of the fund. Frankly, we were awash in figures that made little sense to us and from which we could see no clear path forward. Joe's precise interpretation of the data brought everything financial into focus.

The group had two major goals:

1. To examine the current rates for all customer classes and to determine if the rates fairly reflected the cost of serving those entities.

We found, based on the Kessler Study and observations by staff, that there was not equity in the rates. You will note in our recommendations that some charges are raised significantly while others remain unchanged for an extended period. Our aim was to bring all to a fair and sustainable level.

2. To recommend a fee schedule that would insure financial stability for the fund well into the future. One that was in line with the charges of neighboring political subdivisions and would provide for the continued funding of the automated pick-up conversion for our 9,000 residential customers. This will, undoubtedly, lead to greater efficiency, lower workman's compensation claims and create a larger labor pool to meet the department's personnel needs.

Another important component built into the proposed fee schedule is an

amount sufficient to fund the planning and construction of a new solid waste facility to meet the needs of our growing customer base. The current facility is no longer adequate.

The committee recommends that the proposed rates be reviewed in three years to insure that they reflect increased efficiency and changing community needs.

Two additional areas of interest voiced by Council were discussed by the group in much detail:

Once per week pick-up for residential customers was an idea that was supported by several committee members. There was discussion both for and against. In the end, based on some very strong sentiments directed to group members by residents and the results of the previously mentioned Kessler Study, it was decided, unanimously, not to recommend a change at this time. According to the Kessler Survey, 87% of residents were satisfied with two pick-ups per week and 64% were opposed to a change even if it meant a reduction in monthly rates (97 cents). Our group did feel that another look at a later date when the automation conversion is complete would be advised. The ease of handling the new wheeled cans and more capacity might change attitudes.

The other area that received considerable attention was the issue of privatization of waste and recycling services. The Group understands that the motivation for Council in raising the question has to do with fiscal accountability and good governance. The Group does not recommend any movement toward privatization at this time for the following reasons:

1. The City of Venice Waste and Recycling rates are competitive with the surrounding area.
2. The department has a 97% satisfied or highly satisfied rate for customer service.
3. A change would undoubtedly result in a move to once per week collection.
4. We would have no guarantee that a “teaser rate” would not be given for

an initial period. (Once the equipment is gone and we're out of business, the cost to revive the department would be prohibitive).

5. We feel, that the kind of personal service provided by Bob Moroni, Susan Carpenter and the staff would not be duplicated by a commercial firm. We know that the department provides many gratis services to community groups which would probably not happen with a for-profit service.

All the above recommendations received a unanimous vote.

A separate motion to recommend discontinuing charges for bulk-residential pick-ups also passed unanimously. It was felt that these charges represented a very small portion of overall revenue and cost valuable staff time in scheduling and billing. Most other political subdivisions, including Sarasota County, do not charge for bulk pick-ups. The feeling was that free pick-ups might result in less illegal dumping.

On behalf of my fellow committee members: Fred Francis, Jerry Jasper, Jack Oros, Mike Pachota, Tony Pinzone and Deb Reynolds, I want to thank Mayor Holic and the Council members for your confidence. It has been our pleasure to serve the community.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Lichtle