



Councilwoman Farmer Disses Trash Rip Off Allegations as "Old News"

By Joe Hyde | Jan. 27, 2017 12:08 am

SAN ANGELO, TX — San Angelo City Councilwoman Charlotte Farmer took less than a couple hours to review the entire document dump about the city's alleged lack of accountability to San Angelo businesses and to itself concerning trash bill overcharges that we provided her today. She proclaimed it 'old news.'



Councilwoman Charlotte Farmer and a Republic Services truck.

"I have reviewed the records! There is no NEW news here, it has been covered, asked, answered and I'm not certain what else your question is? What would you like for me to comment on that has not been fully disclosed and answered?"

"There is not any NEW news either."

"Perhaps you would be better satisfied with answers from our City Manager who is the person you should be dealing with."

"Thank you and again, have a nice day," the city's Mayor Pro Tem stated this afternoon in an email to our investigator.

Citizens of San Angelo were shocked to learn the city has no official audit it promised of the alleged overcharging by Republic Services for over a decade for "Total Fuel/Environmental Recovery Fees" that increased commercial trash customers' invoices significantly. The current Republic Services website states that the ERF amounts to 15 percent of the total amount charged. Farmer maintains the charges are "in the single digits" of percentage points according to an audit she claims to have reviewed in 2014. That audit cannot be found, but the City did produce an unsigned draft audit that read, "Republic had been overcharging commercial customers for many years. The total amount that had been overcharged is too great and spanned too many years to be determined."

In 2014, Republic Services announced it will refund approximately \$6.5 million to San Angelo commercial dumpster customers. The corporation did not admit guilt, but the gesture was in

response to neither the City nor Republic being able to find specific city council authorization for the extra fees to be added to commercial trash customers' invoices.

The City protects Republic from competition with exclusivity. Because of this, Republic must obtain permission via ordinance from the City Council for all of its rates and service charges.

The City has no record of to whom and what amounts Republic Services refunded.

In response to our reporting, City Manager Daniel Valenzuela requested that Republic Services account for all refunds the company stated it made. The city attorney's office stated Republic refused to provide the information, citing "pending litigation."

Despite known allegations of Republic Services overcharging commercial customers for over a decade, Farmer pressed the council to approve the new trash contract with Republic Services in 2014. She voted in favor of selecting Republic and rejecting the competitive bid from Texas Disposal Systems on April 1, 2014. She again voted in favor of ordinance changes that hiked all trash fees to be in accordance with the new trash agreement in July 2014, and also voted to execute the exclusive contract in July 2014.

Republic began a new 10-year exclusive trash collection and landfill management contract with the City of San Angelo August 1, 2014.

A lawsuit filed against Republic over the alleged overcharges by Texas Disposal-affiliated Acme Iron and Metal and Mayfield Paper has been stalled in the Tom Green County 119th District Court since late 2015.

Farmer declared her candidacy for mayor in the May 6 election on Jan. 19.