

City unveils new recycling program

By ASHLEY TOMPKINS, Editor and Publisher | Posted: Thursday, April 26, 2012 8:00 am

Sealy residents who have their solid waste trash collected each week by Texas Disposal Systems will soon have an added bonus.

The City of Sealy this month announced plans to add single stream recycling in the solid waste collection program.

The addition of single stream recycling is something residents have been asking for, said Sealy Mayor Nick Tirey.

“Texas Disposal Systems has done a phenomenal job,” he said earlier this month at a meeting where city council members approved the new contract. “The citizens have wanted this and will embrace this.”

Collection should start within 90 days.

Residents will receive an additional 96-gallon cart, at no cost, to use for storing all recyclable items. The bins, which normally cost customers \$7-8, will be marked with what items can and can't be placed inside.

TDS officials attending the city council meeting this month said all recyclable items can be placed in the cart.

Collection of trash will remain weekly and TDS crews will collect the recyclable material bi-weekly.

In addition to the free cart, customers will see a freeze in their solid waste fees pertaining to trash collection for the next two years. The city signed a 10-year contract with TDS for both programs, an increase from the previous five-year contract.

After two years, rates will increase 3 percent each year for the next eight years.

While the increase may seem drastic, Tirey pointed out the city, in the past, has passed on the typical 4 percent increase each year.

Councilman Mark Stolarski, who was the only one to vote against the contract, balked at the 24 percent increase over the total of eight years. While he thinks the program will be good for customers and is something needed, he wanted TDS to drop its annual rate increase to 2 to 2.5 percent.

Councilman Steve Wilson pointed out the company is taking “a big risk on their part” to freeze rate increases for two years and then lower them for another eight.

Moving forward

Some council members were concerned with signing a 10-year contract. Sealy City Manager Chris Coffman explained the 10-year contract was needed due to the “substantial investment” TDS plans to make in the city.

The city can suspend the contract at any point by providing 90 days notice to the contractor.

Not only will the company provide a recycling program, it also plans to use the city’s current collection facility while paying a \$2 per ton host fee to the city.

Eventually, the company wants to build and operate a solid waste transfer station in Sealy, expanding its business in the region.

The company has a station in Weimar, about 40 miles away. TDS can use the city’s facility for now, but will have to build its own center that is efficient and designed for its operation. For now, the recyclable material will be collected and then transported to the company's facility in Buda, where it will be sorted, recycled and repurposed.

TDS has a retail store at its facility in Buda, where it sells mulch and compost to customers, and plans to do the same in Sealy once a facility is constructed and opened.

TDS officials said Sealy would be a model for how the system can work in smaller cities. The Buda facility handles 100 percent of the city of Austin’s recycling from roughly 175,000 homes. Sealy will receive the same services, just on a smaller scale.

Coffman said while the deal seems to be too good to be true, it is not.

“This will benefit the community greatly,” he said.

Once up and running with its own facility, TDS plans to employ 30-40 people and will make an economic investment of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

“Y’all want us cause you’re spending some money,” said councilwoman Yvonne Johnson. “We need this.”