

THE SUN

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City Council

Garbage contract up for a vote

By JOSH PHERIGO

If it ain't broke, don't throw it out.

That's the message City of Georgetown staff is presenting to city council this week, following a months-long bidding process for the city's garbage contract.

Pending council approval at Tuesday's meeting, city officials hope to begin negotiations extending Georgetown's 14-year relationship

with Texas Disposal Systems.

"There had to be something that really positively stood out for us to make a change," Assistant City Manager Jim Briggs said. "But the offers were very comparable."

The city's utility board on Friday gave their go-ahead for staff to ink a deal that would expand the city's recycling services by adding single stream and green recycling options.

The bid-process began last fall when a split, 4-3 city council vote opened the job to outside offers. At the time, council members said they were pleased with the TDS service, but some felt the city might save money by playing the field.

Six companies submitted bids for what's likely to be a five-year contract worth as much as \$25 million. Staff reviewed the proposals, re-

Continued on 10A



Josh Pherigo

Texas Disposal Systems employee Victor Silva loads trash into the back of a container truck Monday afternoon at the Georgetown Waste Transport Center.

City's garbage contract comes before council

Continued from 1A

jected one offer that didn't meet standards, and ranked the remaining five. The two highest bids, those placed by Waste Management and IEIS, a Progressive Waste Solutions company, were tossed from consideration.

That left the three low bids: Allied Waste Services, Texas Disposal Systems and Central Texas Refuse.

"Each of the respondents had to meet strict requirements in order to bid," said Kathy Ragsdale, the city's director of environmental and conservation services. "They had to first prove they had the capability to do what they were proposing."

Unlike the lowest-bidder-wins system used to contract many of the city's construction projects, the criteria for the waste contract placed the majority of significance on factors other than price, Mr. Briggs said.

Staff scored the companies based 40 percent on price, 30 percent on methodology, 20 percent on experience and references and 10 percent on financial capacity.

TDS came out ahead based on those factors, Ms. Ragsdale said.

She presented staff's recommendation that

city leaders approve a negotiation process that would first seek to work out a deal with TDS.

"If that stalls," Ms. Ragsdale said. "We'd then start talking with Central Texas Refuse."

The third option, she said, would be to combine services offered by Allied with those offered by CTR.

"All of these companies could get the job done," Mr. Briggs said. "They'd go about it in different ways, but we're confident any of these three could do the work."

While seeking a contract renewal last fall, TDS proposed adding green waste recycling and single stream, a more comprehensive recycling system to its service at a minimal cost to the city, said TDS spokesman Verna Browning.

The city then asked other contractors to pitch similar proposals in their bids.

Under the single-stream recycling model, city customers would receive recycling carts to replace the 18-gallon bins that residents currently use. The program would also increase the amount materials that could be recycled, Ms. Browning said.

"Right now, in Georgetown, we only take plastics one and two for recycled materials. This would expand that to plastics one through seven," Ms. Browning said. "Like those little flimsy plastic containers that vegetables come in, that could be recycled, as well as your laundry detergent bottles and things like that."

TDS is also offering to accept additional materials not normally included within traditional single stream programs.

"So, that would include things like aluminum foil, gable-top cartons, which include things like milk and orange juice cartons, aseptic containers, which are the juice boxes that kids usually bring in their lunch boxes to school," Ms. Browning said.

TDS is also offering to accept small e-waste appliances such as cell phones, toasters and computer monitors.

City staff requested applicants pitch a green waste program that would allow residents to have curb-side pickup of plant and lawn debris occasionally throughout the year.

Under the TDS proposal, the company would collect green waste, including tree branches, grass clippings and other foliage, twice a year.

"All of that would then be composted instead of going into the landfill," Ms. Browning said.

Taking staff time, consulting work and legal reviews into consideration, costs for the bid process will likely add to more than \$200,000, Mr. Briggs said.

"That's just the price of doing business," he said, adding that staff will try to recoup those expenses in contract negotiations. "In a \$22 million dollar contract, \$200,000 isn't much."

Mr. Briggs said he hopes to have the contract back for council approval next month.

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