



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

AGENDA SECTION	WORK SESSION
MEETING DATE	APRIL 6, 2026

ITEM:	Organics Services Contract Extension and Billing Updates. (10 Minutes)	
<i>Presenting Item: David Cullen Public Works Director</i>		
DEPARTMENT: Public Works	BY/DATE: Jesse Davies / March 30, 2026	
CORE CITY STRATEGIES: <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an "X" in front of the selected text below)</i>		
_ Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity	X Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking	
_ High Quality Public Spaces	_ Resilient and Prosperous Economy	
_ Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone	_ Inclusive and Connected Community	

BACKGROUND

In 2024, council approved an updated Solid Waste Operating Policy (Resolution 2024-16) to continue to offer curbside organic collection. Updates were needed at that time as staff could not find a provider option for continued mixed compost and yard waste. A resident survey at the time showed preference for a smaller curbside pail or container. Most households generate only 6–10 lbs. of food organics per week.

Better Futures, a Minnesota-based workforce nonprofit, was the only provider able to deliver weekly pail-emptying service without requiring an additional cart (single source provider rule was utilized to complete the contracting process). The City entered a two-year contract with Better Futures to pilot year-round consistent curbside organics collection.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATUS

Currently approximately 500 Columbia Heights households are enrolled for curbside compost collection. While overall citywide trash volumes have not yet decreased from previous years (current organics diversion is less than 60 tons per year out of 7,500 tons of total trash, with recent growth from new apartment buildings and homes), the program remains a key component of the upcoming Anoka County Waste Reduction Challenge launching in mid-2026. Participation in organics collection will be required for households to qualify for the lowest volume (30-gallon, every-other-week) trash service. Properties will still need to sign up for organics service and will be audited from time to time to ensure continuous participation.

Better Futures has delivered curbside organics collection for more than 104 weeks to the participating properties citywide. Service performance has been strong, with only 47 missed pickups in the past year (less than one per week or less than 1% overall) and all issues resolved within 24 hours.

In December 2025, the Refuse Coordinator and Better Futures representative attended the Sustainability Commission meeting to give an update on the on the compost collection program as well as Better Futures services. Based on the information provided as well as the plan to phase out pail collection, returning to comingled collection of yard waste and compost in 2029 the recommendation from the commission was to move forward with a new contract with Better Futures to continue services for three years.

Better Futures will maintain its current rate of \$13.90 per pail per month for the first year of the extension. For 2025, the annual net cost to the City’s Refuse Fund was \$34,551 after accounting for:

OVERALL EXPENSES FOR 2025	
Organics supplies	3370
Collection & hauling	66058
Composting	5450
TOTAL	\$ 74,878
OVERALL REVENUE FOR 2025	
Participant fee revenue	25327
SCORE grant	15000
TOTAL	\$ 40,327
NET EXPENSES TO REFUSE FUND	\$ (34,551)

Anoka County’s Solid Waste Plan as well as Minnesota State Statute require that households participating in curbside organics collection not be charged more than non-participating properties. Because the City already offers citywide organics service, the separate organics fee must be eliminated and the cost combined into the citywide general recycling fee (which covers recycling carts, yard waste, bulk recycling, organics, and the recycle center). The Finance Department plans to incorporate this change during the upcoming five-year rate study, with implementation targeted for January 2027.

It should also be noted that before the proposed contract ends in March 2029, the City will issue an RFP to explore additional options (green-bag programs, commingled carts, dedicated organics carts, etc.) for residents to have curbside organic services.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend extending the contract with Better Futures for three additional years through March 2029 (see attached contract) to continue curbside compost pickup. Staff will continue to update the council on plans to incorporate the state/county organics billing requirements into the citywide general recycling fee, as determined by the Finance Department through their current rate study. These updates will also be reflected in subsequent revisions of the City’s Solid Waste Operating Plan.

Requested Council Action/ Discussion Topics / Key Questions
Staff requests that the Council review and give feedback on continuing compost collection services with Better Futures for an additional three years. Additionally staff plans to keep council updated with efforts to comply with the Anoka County Solid Waste Plan and Minnesota State Statute billing requirements for organics services.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- City of Columbia Heights Solid Waste Plan
- Anoka County Solid Waste Plan (excerpt)
- Organic Survey (excerpt)
- 2024 Contract for Organics Services with Better Futures
- Proposed 3yr Contract for Organic Services with Better Futures