



MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 23, 2023
TO: Chair Bryson and CBJ Public Works and Facilities Committee
FROM: Katie Koester, Engineering & Public Works Director
SUBJECT: Finding Focus: Waste Diversion vs Trash.

The Committee, and staff, have felt untethered as we work on Assembly goal 5. A “Develop a zero waste or waste reduction plan.” Part of that comes from the myriad of waste issues facing the community. How does responding to severely reduced hours at the landfill fit under “develop a zero waste plan?” Do we want to exercise more control over our waste stream? How do we entertain ideas on a new waste disposal solution under the goal “develop a waste reduction plan?” The enormity of the issue, and CBJs indirect relationship with key players, has had us ping-pong back and forth between seizing the moment on opportunities (composting grants), pursuing incremental waste diversion strategies (refrigerator disposal) and panicking about long term issues (what are we going to do in 20 years?). I ask that the committee re-assess the zero waste planning goal, the appetite for pursuing it in the context of waste issues, and what other waste strategies the committee wants to invest precious time and attention in.

1. Zero Waste. Staff has laid out the steps for developing a zero waste plan in the attached document. The plan development is fairly straightforward and will involve a waste characterization study, outreach to key stakeholders, prioritization, public engagement and goal setting. More ambitious is implementing a zero waste plan which will include new infrastructure, programs and services. For example, one outcome could be developing the Lemon Creek gravel pit as a zero waste subdivision site and building out sites for increased recycling, composting, and processing construction debris.

The term zero waste is misleading – the community will never get to zero waste. It is better to think about it as waste reduction. Waste reduction would extend the life of the landfill, however it will not replace the eventual need for an alternative waste disposal solution for Juneau.

2. Trash Issues? Does CBJ want to exercise more than influence over Waste Management and/or Alaska Waste? Are we willing to take steps to have a seat at that table either through regulatory changes, building waste infrastructure or purchasing the certificate of convenience. I don’t expect an answer to these questions at today’s meeting – but direction on how to engage on this issue will help us focus.

Recommendation: Discuss zero waste plan development strategy and provide recommendations.

Discuss waste disposal and give direction on prioritizing trash issues outside of waste reduction.

Enc: Zero Waste Planning Pathway memo