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News Release

Two new trash trucks making possible big changes in sanitation

Four-day routes, pilot curbside recycling, more special pickups now a reality

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (February 14, 2017) — The City Commission of Arkansas City voted 5-0 on Feb. 7 to authorize the purchase of two new sanitation trucks from Downing Sales & Service, Inc., of Phillipsburg, Missouri, for an amount not to exceed \$347,205.

The two new trucks are the first steps in a sanitation transition plan that eventually could lead to a four-day residential trash pickup schedule and at least a pilot curbside recycling program in some areas.

Public Works Director Eric Broce gave a brief presentation to the commissioners about his department's sanitation goals, which include providing better customer service, developing more efficient routes, increasing community participation in recycling and ultimately providing a cleaner environment.

To accomplish those goals, Broce said, the Public Services Division will need to transition to four-day residential trash service, which will alleviate confusion during weeks with holidays and free up one day a week for various tasks such as special pickups, recycling drop-off, and commercial recycling.

"We had talked about potentially eliminating that service altogether," Broce said of the Saturday recycling drop-off. "However, I'd hate to lose that service and I think it's a great service for the elderly."

Additionally, Broce said, the implementation of onboard GPS units in all of the sanitation trucks will help to make routes more efficient and better document when residential poly-carts haven't been put out.

Going to a four-day schedule also would reduce advertising costs and cut down on overtime pay, because the current Saturday recycling drop-off point on Madison Avenue could be moved to Friday.

Finally, the purchase of the new trucks and transitioning to four days a week would make possible the launch of a pilot curbside recycling program in selected neighborhoods later this year, with a full-scale volunteer curbside recycling program feasible as soon as 2018 or 2019, if demand justifies it.

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“Making (recycling) mandatory is not something we’ve ever even discussed,” Broce said. “We think through education, we can get a large participation.”

Other benefits of the planned changes include improved customer service, better workflow for service orders and special pickups, and a routine day such as Friday for truck fleet maintenance.

The new trucks are a Pak-Mor 25-yard tandem-axle truck, for \$169,234, and a Pak-Mor 20-yard single-axle truck, for \$177,971. A 14-year-old truck with 101,323 miles will be traded in for \$10,000 value.

Assistant Public Works Director Mike Crandall said the smaller single-axle truck would be used downtown for commercial pickups because it can more easily and safely navigate the narrow alleys.

Growth of recycling

Arkansas City’s recycling efforts more than doubled in 2015 and continued to grow last year, when the total amount of recycling climbed nearly another 90,000 pounds, for a total take of 611,191 pounds.

“When we first started, before we got the carts and the trailers, we were doing 70,000 to 80,000 pounds a year,” said City Manager Nick Hernandez. That number increased to more than 252,000 pounds in 2014, when two recycling trailers were added to the City’s Saturday recycling efforts.

The total amount of recycling collected more than doubled in 2015 to 526,000 pounds, thanks to increases at both trailers and a huge jump in the amount of cardboard taken in from commercial sites.

The total amount of recycling collected in 2016 can be broken down in five ways:

- Cowley College trailer — 164,240 pounds (up from 141,910 pounds in 2015 and 87,007 in 2014);
- VFW Post 1254 trailer — 140,410 pounds (up from 128,870 pounds in 2015 and 75,566 in 2014);
- West Madison Avenue collections on Saturdays — 70,640 pounds (down from 95,130 pounds in 2015 and 89,691 in 2014);
- Cardboard collected — 203,143 pounds, up from 149,781 in 2015 (this was not counted separately in 2014 or years prior);
- Glass collected — 32,758 pounds, up from 10,657 in 2015 (also not counted separately in 2014).

The 2016 cardboard numbers would be even higher, except much of the cardboard taken in from January through March was accounted for at the Madison Avenue shop because the City was without a replacement box truck for commercial cardboard recycling until mid-March. The old truck burned in a fire.

Even the lowest collection month in 2016 — July — saw more than 45,000 pounds brought in, with a high of 57,430 pounds last December. Those numbers only exceeded 28,000 pounds during one month in 2014, which means the average monthly volume of recycling also has doubled in just two years' time.

Crandall said last month was the biggest collection month yet, with 66,720 pounds dropped off.

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