
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SOLID WASTE ACTIVITIES

April 4, 2023 at 4:45 PM

Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Stewart, Cavanaugh, Fajardo, E. Sapienza

Messrs.: C. Newton

1. Communication from Tim Clougherty, Public Works Director, and Jeff Belanger, Planning & Community Development Director, recommending that Manchester define who is eligible for municipal solid waste collection by establishing criteria via city ordinances, and that the "Downtown Collection Zone" be modified.

Chaz Newton, Solid Waste & Environmental Programs Manager, stated with me this evening is Jeff Belanger, Planning & Community Development Director. We are here today to present a recommendation from the Department of Public Works and the Department of Planning & Community Development regarding the cleanliness of the City of Manchester. As you know, overflowing trash in unclean properties and alleyways have been contributing to issues such as rodent infestation. To mitigate this problem, we recommend revisions to current ordinances. Currently, the city collects trash and recycling from a diverse range of customers, including commercial properties and large residential buildings. These properties generate a significant amount of waste on a weekly basis that is difficult to manage and leads to the aforementioned issues. To address this problem, we recommend requiring certain commercial properties to dispose of the waste via private entities, along with large residential properties, utilizing dumpsters wherever possible. The documents found within your packet depict the reasons why we believe this change is necessary. Additionally, we are proposing alterations to the Downtown Collection Zone to more accurately account for refuse collections needs. Our proposed changes are directed at cleaning up the city, reducing the potential for rodent proliferation, and providing the appropriate level of service to all customers, including downtown businesses. With that, we would be happy to entertain any questions the committee may have.

Alderman Fajardo stated I will start by saying I think this is great and I am prepared to give it a hardy yes but I did have a couple of questions and I wanted to share an observation. From the materials you provided, the area, while it is expanding, doesn't really go up past Union and that is where ward 4 starts so that is what I think about a lot. I get a lot of calls from constituents regarding trash overflow. I actually recently had someone ask me if they can have more than one collection per week. That is the information I wanted to share. The question is could this ever extend beyond the downtown district because I feel like a lot of people who live in those very densely packed neighborhoods, for example, like Dutton Street and Jane Street, that is already crowded with cars and trash...I get calls about rodents. I think that is an area that could use a similar approach and I wanted to share that.

Mr. Newton responded just so I understand correctly, you are referring to the area up by Union Street to be collected more than once per week like the Downtown Collection Zone. Is that correct?

Alderman Fajardo replied more so applying the private collection to multi-family buildings. I think the threshold was five?

Mr. Newton answered yes the recommended threshold is greater than four units.

Alderman Fajardo asked so could the private collection be expanded. I know that multiple collections by the city during the week is challenging. Could the private collection be extended eventually? You don't have to say yes or no. I just want to advocate for that. When I see this, I think it is great but I know it is needed in other areas.

Mr. Newton responded yes and this recommendation for the Downtown Collection Zone was in conjunction with the Economic Development Office and based on what we are currently observing that warrants seven day a week collection. That is the history behind this proposal.

Alderman Fajardo stated that makes sense. It is just food for thought in the future.

Chairman Stewart stated you mentioned in the paperwork that we got that in addition to having the goal of preventing rodent infestation, which I think is something we all want to see, this brings us in line with the practices of other cities across New England and in New Hampshire certainly. Can you talk a little bit about what is different here versus how other cities operate and what their policies and procedures might be?

Mr. Newton answered we conducted a survey of other municipalities and that included Nashua, Portsmouth, Lowell and Worcester to just name a few. Nashua excludes all commercial buildings from municipal collection and residential buildings greater than six units. Lowell excludes all commercial businesses and residential buildings greater than four units. Portsmouth excludes residential buildings greater than four units and also commercial buildings. We are definitely unique when it comes to other municipalities in the sense that there have never been any eligibility criteria set by the municipality as it refers to trash collection. All of these other municipalities at one time or another set those eligibility criteria via their ordinances.

Chairman Stewart stated the reasoning here, and correct me if I am wrong, is that the once a week collection is just not enough to account for and pick-up all of the trash that accumulates in these larger properties in the span of a week. Is that the general impetus behind this?

Mr. Newton replied that is correct. Private waste collectors are generally able to provide more frequent waste collections than municipal waste collectors. That could obviously reduce the amount of time that waste is left outside and exposed to vermin. Additionally, private waste collectors may be able to provide more customized waste collection services based on the specific needs of each address whether that be dumpsters or multiple collections per week and things of that nature.

Chairman Stewart stated I know there will probably be some logistical challenges with some properties from footprints to actually placing a dumpster. One of the things I am concerned about is the last I heard DPW was down 40+ people. Do we know if the private waste collectors have the capacity to take on new customers at this time?

Mr. Newton responded we have spoken to a couple of private entities and they said that they are able to collect and they would be prepared for that. We have had communication with them in the recent past given the fact that we were going to be presenting this to the Board.

Chairman Stewart stated that is good to hear. Also, this is going to be a fairly big change and out of the norm for the state and the region. Still, we might be an anomaly but it is still going to be a change if we were to go back in line with everybody else. What are we doing about talking to the people who are going to be affected?

Mr. Newton answered we do have a plan in place in the event that the Board does want to move forward with our recommendation. That will include Nixle notifications, notices sent in the mail and things of that nature. We can then obviously figure out some more ways to communicate. We haven't communicated anything yet because nothing has been determined but we are prepared and we have an implementation timeline that involves a lot of education to the residents and property owners.

Chairman Stewart stated I think that will be key. I am just looking at the timeline for approval and implementation that you shared today. It looks to me like issuing the first letter to property owners in week 12 might be a little late. You might want to get ahead of that. I always think that giving people an early heads up is generally a good idea specifically if we want to incorporate their feedback and ultimately get their literal and figurative buy-in here.

Mr. Newton stated I agree. The implementation timeline is a draft and things can be tweaked as we move forward.

*On motion of **Alderman Cavanaugh**, duly seconded by **Alderman E. Sapienza**, it was voted to approve the recommended changes.*

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Cavanaugh**, duly seconded by **Alderman E. Sapienza**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand".

Clerk of Committee