

Yard Waste Issues – Work Session, August 4, 2010

We are currently dumping nine roll-off containers a day, six days a week. Since so much material is dumped on the ground rather than in the containers we frequently have to send two people with the skid steer or loader to each site. It takes six to eight man-hours per day with two people at a cost of almost \$32,000 per year for labor alone. Equipment costs add about another \$3,000 to \$4,000 per year. Even at this level of investment we are hard pressed to keep the drop-off sites presentable.

Much of the material we are getting at the drop-off sites cannot be composted. We find tires, mattresses, shingles, and other construction debris, particularly during the weekends. The sites are not manned so there is no way to prevent the disposal of unsuitable materials at the sites.

When our one and only hook truck broke down we had to close the sites for almost two weeks. During that time we received phone calls from people in Del Norte, La Jara, Monte Vista and others asking where they should be disposing of their yard waste. This made it very clear to us that we are serving people outside of the traditional municipal area and not the residents of Alamosa who are the ones paying for this service..

Our current system not sustainable at our current resource levels and probably does not make sense as a municipal activity.

Alternatives:

- Allow residents to put yard waste in their residential containers. If they do not have room in their existing containers we can provide additional 96 gallon containers for an additional \$9.00/mo just as we do now for those who need more containers for their trash. This has the advantage of using our existing residential system and requires the least amount of adaptation on the part of our customers. The biggest disadvantage is that we will be hauling this material to the landfill and paying to dispose of it here. Not the most environmentally sound practice, and branches could be a problem.
- Issue yard waste pick-up stickers at a nominal cost – we currently charge \$0.50 per sticker. Right now the resident has to call for pickup but that could be changed to regular pickup days. The residential operator would contact the Sanitation Supervisor who would use a pickup with or without a trailer or a flat bed truck and go out “as needed”. This has the advantage of the lowest fixed and operating costs since we would not have to run a regular route regardless of the amount of material to be picked up. The biggest disadvantage is that this system could overwhelm our resources if it is too heavily used. This option could be a precursor to following and help us gauge demand before implementing a more elaborate program.
- Set up a yard waste route during the May through September periods. We would need to run a second residential route using backup residential trucks and trailers. The number of days we run of course, would depend on the number of customers

who choose to take advantage of the service. We should be able to handle up to 400 customers per day. Some fee would have to be instituted to cover the costs, but not more than \$5.00/mo. One major advantage of a pay system is that the costs for providing the service are carried by those who use it and not the public at large. This system would be convenient for our customers but would require separate procedures not required by the first option and possibly additional equipment at some point. We would have to procure containers for this type of system. Branches could be a problem (cannot pick them up in the automated units) but they could be handled on an as needed basis since our customers are not likely to be trimming trees every week. Small shrub type clippings and garden weeds can be processed in the normal containers.

- At some point it makes sense to re-locate our entire recycling operation to the 12th Street yard. This will give us more room to improve our collection and process facilities. Since this is where we also bring our yard waste, the re-cycling personnel could also manage commercial yard maintenance firms who also bring yard waste to our facility. If we do eventually add a dump station for septage haulers this facility would be in the same general area. The recycling personnel could manage this facility as well.

These are some issues we have to address. For the second and third options things such as bag types allowed, weight, bundling of branches and the like would have to be addressed but all manageable concerns. What is apparent is that our current system is not working. It is almost impossible to maintain the sites, we are providing services to out of town residents who do not pay solid waste fees, and spending inordinate amounts of our limited resources for unsatisfactory outcomes.