

Climate, Water, Environment, and Parks Committee (CWEPC) Meeting Transcript – 8/27/2025

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[9:33:39 AM]

oh. >> And it is 934 and I will call to order the climate, water, environment and parks committee. We are here at 301 west second street in the boards and commissions room. The entire committee is present. So with that, we are going to open it up for public communication. And I believe we have three speakers this morning. All right. >> If I can have Mike kennerty.

[9:34:47 AM]

>> If I can have Mike kennerty. >> Good morning. Council members. Mike kennerty here. I'm in an unofficial representation today of the friends of Barton springs pool and the Barton springs conservancy. But actually, that's why I'm supporting our new shirt. I wanted to start off by thanking council for the resolution y'all passed. I think it was last week to sort of explore some new funding recommendations. I know this has been a priority for the council and this committee in particular, and I want to share a few observations that maybe you already know about, about the three things that you all put in play. The the lgc feasibility idea is certainly something worth looking into. I don't think it requires cooperation by the county, and I think that's something that is maybe a requirement for the parks district, but the park maintenance fee seems like it's a really good short term

[9:35:47 AM]

a really good short term solution. I hope that we're going to be able to make some progress with that as well. And I just also wanted to mention something that was featured, I think, in the park director's presentation last week about the the expert study. They had noted these three, among other ideas, to look into for funding resources, but something that was also featured prominently. I think it was a third recommendation they had was to explore working with nonprofit sector to try to unlock private money to help supplement what the city does. I know council has been doing great work trying to address our budget needs with the TRE election, and we're going to have upcoming council action to try to find funding. But unlocking the private sector is, you all know, is a way to get kind of I would call free money. It just takes some council direction and support for that to happen. So there was a questionnaire that was put out to the public. And in the course of coming up with that recommendation, and it was worth noting that the most popular category of

[9:36:49 AM]

most popular category of raising money was new, dedicated funding sources ahead of increasing fees and ahead of increasing taxes. And then the most two most popular ways to find new dedicated funding sources, according to the survey, was additional nonprofit parks supporting the parks and also additional avenues for financial donations to the park system. So I'm hoping that's something that will be. I know you guys are supporters of nonprofits in the space, and I just urge you to continue to do that to help bring private money to help our park system. One thing that, you know, whether it's for a nonprofit or even for the lgc, which is essentially kind of a nonprofit, a key action that council can take is to unlock the funding sources by providing some formal direction to the city about what we want to see in our park systems. So I've been raising money for Barton springs pool for the last 15 years, and we had the benefit of a Barton springs pool master plan, and so private donors would actually feel comfortable knowing there's there's a plan here the city has adopted. We want to

[9:37:49 AM]

city has adopted. We want to see so and so happen. And that is a big part of whether a new lgc is created or whether we tap into other nonprofit partners in our parks. I urge council to give us direction. That was fast. All right. Thank you very much. >> Up next we're going to have Chris Lynn wells. Chris Lynn wells. If we don't have Chris Lynn next we'll have Santiago. >> Greetings. Council members. Still trying to catch my breath. I just ran across the lake to get here and. Slow my heartbeat down for a minute. I didn't

[9:38:51 AM]

down for a minute. I didn't literally run across the lake. I crossed one of the bridges that goes over the lake. And I'm here today to speak some concern about what I believe the council is being sort of blindsided by the I-35 bridge and the deconstruction of it and the reconstruction of it. One of the first phases for the disruption of the of the pedestrian way across. Across the Colorado river, which is a very sensitive ecosystem that was disturbed back in the 50s with the first crossing and then again in the 80s, which has created a massive dead zone beneath I-35, has no had no ecological restoration whatsoever, continually erodes, including on the south shore where there's a Harper ferry

[9:39:51 AM]

where there's a Harper ferry branch, which has been completely asphalted over by I-35, which was again blindsided by the public, done in secret by txdot director in the 50s, which the current txdot headquarters is named after. I'm advocating for a transportation study, something that can be done in action specifically around the Colorado river through Rainey street trailhead, up to the trail that goes all the way around the lake, including honoring the tejano trail, which is a nrhp recognized. Pathways, I suppose. So, yeah, the first phase of the bridge is going to be building a

[9:40:53 AM]

is going to be building a pedestrian bridge, a multi-modal path 20ft wide. There has been very poor renderings distributed to the public. There's going to be a bridge meeting that I'm here on behalf of festival beach food forest, and informally, we have a quarterly meeting guaranteed with txdot. We were written into the eyes and on September 4th, I would like council members to maybe be present for that space and see the presentation for the bridge and ask some very critical questions about what that has to look like and how it's going to connect and maintain. Connectivity with the east avenue trail. And I appreciate any consideration. >> Thank you very much for being here and call attention to that issue. Appreciate. All right. With that, we will move to item number one, approval of the minutes for our July 30th

[9:41:54 AM]

the minutes for our July 30th meeting. Is there a motion to approve the minutes. So moved by council member duchen, seconded by vice chair Ellis. Without objection, the minutes are approved. That now takes us to item number two, a briefing on the transfer facility. I believe director Mchale is here from Austin resource recovery. Good morning. >> Good morning. Council members. Chair. Vice chair. So. No now okay. There we go. All right. Once again, I'm Richard Mchale, director for Austin

[9:42:57 AM]

Mchale, director for Austin resource recovery. Glad to be able to be here to discuss the results of the feasibility study that we had done for a transfer station. This is something that's been wanted for a while now within the department and the community. And so now we have some feedback from our consultant, who did a lot of work on this to kind of help us determine what the cost impact will be and the general location where it should be. So the slide I have up there right now is not our transfer station. I would love if it were, but it this is actually a facility in Bellevue, Washington adjacent to Seattle. So this is the factoria transfer station. They have a it's fully enclosed facility, materials brought in there. They even have a citizen drop off that is within the building. That little building there to the right, that is a household hazardous waste facility that they've added to that facility to facilitate collecting materials from the general public without them having to go to various sites and

[9:43:57 AM]

go to various sites and everything. So city staff and myself actually went up to this facility on our when we started doing our due diligence on these projects to to kind of see what some of the best practices were out there. And this was definitely one of them. So. So the purpose of this study was really to determine if it was going to be cheaper for us to direct haul from our roots to the landfill. And that means basically just, you know, not going to another facility that we would go straight to a disposal facility, whether that be a landfill or recycling facility or a compost facility. So and if and if so, if that was warranted, what part of town would it be best suited in. So with that. Go ahead and go to the next slide. This obviously by the the TRE coloration. This is not Texas. This is the northeast. This is Delaware actually. So but it kind of gives an example of how facilities can be placed within their environment and them not stand out and be esthetically unpleasing. So but what is a transfer station. And so quite simply, it's a facility where

[9:44:59 AM]

simply, it's a facility where solid waste is temporarily collected, sorting consolidated before being transferred to larger vehicles for transportation to either a landfill or recycling facility. So this particular picture is from the city of Dallas. So this is kind of an indoor operation as well. So you can see that pile of material has been dumped from trucks. And that material will then be pushed into a larger tractor trailer to then be sent, I would assume, to the landfill that the city of Dallas operates. I think it's not only important to determine what is a transfer station, but what is it not? So if any of you have kind of grown up in a rural part of Texas or another, another state, you may have had the opportunity to go to kind of your county transfer station, which in most cases is a pretty simple, basic operation, kind of a lean to building, kind of open on one side, exposed to the elements, typically does handles trash. It may have a

drop off center nearby. So that is not what we're looking at doing. We are looking at having an enclosed building because of

[9:46:01 AM]

an enclosed building because of the the some negative environmental externalities that can occur, whether it be odors or litters and everything we want to keep that contained in the building and not be in so that we can be a good neighbor to, to whomever our neighbors are. It's also a facility. And you'll see on this slide it's temporary collected. So the material is not landfilled there. It is not kept there it is. Once it goes there that day, it is removed that same day to a final disposal site. So we don't want to keep any materials in the building and the and issues that can come along with that, whether it be any type of vermin or or odors or even the potential for a fire. So the material would be removed every day. So what are some of the benefits of the transfer station? And they're they're numerous. So obviously we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And really this is done by reducing our off route mileage. And when I say off route mileage I'm talking about time where our operators are not collecting materials. They're

[9:47:02 AM]

collecting materials. They're actually just driving either to and from the route or from the route to disposal facility. Most of our operations require two loads, so you can imagine that's can be quite a significant amount of windshield time where they're not actually collecting something. So that's very inefficient from our standpoint. It's, you know, we we pay these operators to collect materials. And then that's where the bulk of that work should be. Instead of having to sit in traffic that that we all experience here in Austin. The by reducing that mileage, we're also just inherently being able to better support electric electrifying our fleet. That has been an issue for us. Austin is a very spread out city, and just having few facilities to be able to to dispose, that creates some long travel times for us. And electric trucks actually get better mileage when they're in the cities and kind of stopping and going because they can use that

[9:48:02 AM]

because they can use that regenerative power from, from the braking to, to charge that battery. We get actually worse mileage when we get out on the highways. So that's definitely an issue for us. So we've seen here we've had a pilot here now for a couple of months now on electric truck. And we're kind of seeing the limitations on it right now. Right now we're getting about a five hour charge out of that truck. So it's not even lasting us the whole day. So definitely by being able to bring these facilities closer to where the the routes are and the final disposal facilities will allow us to facilitate moving into more

electric trucks. And I think as time every year the technology gets a little bit better, a little bit better, but it's not just quite there at this point. Some cities have gone, gone all out. You know, I think New York had some cng trucks that they purchased. But, you know, they have very small routes. You can have a city block, basically fill up a trash truck there and then they can head off. So it works a lot better in dense cities. Not so well in cities that are spread out, such as Austin. So.

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out, such as Austin. So. >> Real quick, I'm just curious what is what's the average distance you talked about hours on a route, but what is our typical collection for? Not electric, but just our standard trucks, like how many miles they drive? >> It's not uncommon to be over 150 miles in a day. >> And out of this, the electric pilot. How many miles ish are you getting? >> So it's. >> Just dealing with the downtown area. So we're not getting a lot of miles. And I don't know the exact number, but it's a very small route. And that's why we wanted to pilot it here because we knew the limitations. So let's let's try it here. And that's fine. I mean, it's you know, it's lasted five hours. But those are things we need to know in the pilot. So you know and what what kind of adjustments do we need to make to be able to be able to facilitate and roll these out kind of department wide? Thank you. The transfer stations you know, they give also another reason an opportunity for the public to dispose of materials. You know oftentimes we'll find a lot of

[9:50:06 AM]

oftentimes we'll find a lot of illegal dumping in some areas that are far from disposal sites. You know, I don't think this is going to solve the illegal dumping problem. You know, you have folks that will always do the right thing. And then unfortunately, we have some folks that will always do the wrong thing. So this is really geared towards that middle group of folks that want to do the right thing. But it may be inconvenient to have to travel all the way across town. So they may have to try and try to find some other alternatives to get rid of that. So this is just another opportunity for for folks to have additional facility to take materials to. It also gives us another opportunity for diversion and disposal opportunities, because as material would come into the facility, we would have the ability to to see what's being brought in, perhaps pull out metals and other items that can be recycled or reused. So yeah, it kind of adds to to the the work that we do. On trying to get our diversion rate up higher. It also is beneficial when we start getting into hard to recycle materials. And I want to say like mattresses. That's kind of our big pain

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That's kind of our big pain right now is mattresses. A lot of demand for folks to be able to recycle mattresses. Right now, they're all being landfilled. But recently there has been at least one vendor that has moved into the the general Austin metropolitan area, and they have significant experience doing tire, excuse me, mattress recycling up in the Seattle and in Vancouver. So they are now here. So they are now a viable option. But they are in Hays County. So a recycling transfer facility like this would allow us to facilitate the collection of mattresses from both city crews and from the public. And then we could do a long range haul down to Hays County to get those recycled. So another opportunity that opens up some new doors for us that we don't currently have. Some other material that will be brought there. We do plan on trying to replicate what we have on Todd Laine with the resource

[9:52:08 AM]

Laine with the resource recovery drop off center, so another option for folks to be able to drop off items at that they want to have recycled, and the ability to also have a reuse center down there where the community that may live in that area can come and and get materials, while citizens from all over the city could come there to, to get materials. But what we found in our Todd Laine transfer or Todd Laine resource recovery drop off center is that the majority of folks that go there in person basically live within a certain radius of that site. So a lot of folks in north Austin just aren't going to make that drive south. So this would give folks another opportunity. And we see this as a benefit, because we're able to pull a lot of materials out of the waste stream that are still usable, whether that be paints, cleaning materials, old tiles, people drop off things that still have a value. And we have a lot of folks that come and they collect those things and they're using them at no cost. So we we definitely see that as a benefit as well. The facility that we would plan

[9:53:11 AM]

facility that we would plan would handle multiple waste streams. So we were looking at not only garbage, but the potential for recycling and organics waste as well. Recycling. Currently we have two contracts, one with circular services, which is kind of in northeast Austin on Johnny Morris, formerly known as balconies resources. And then when Texas disposal systems down in Creedmoor. So for a transfer station, those facilities are pretty close to where we're at. So we probably wouldn't run that material through those transfer stations, and we would continue direct hauling to those. Since about 40% of the material that's generated south of the river would go to TDS, and 60% of the material north of the river goes to balconies. And that's the current contract. And so at this point, I wouldn't see city crews dumping recycling there necessarily, but we would definitely have perhaps other entities that may want to come and have recycling, whether that be private haulers or, or private individuals that may want to get rid of some material. So and we'd also want

[9:54:12 AM]

material. So and we'd also want to have an organics system there where we could collect organics as well. One of the problems we have with organics currently, as of as of today, we have one vendor that handles that there in bastrop county. And traffic can get really bad heading out to bastrop county. So we have a we incur a lot of overtime having to move that material out there. So we will be coming to council tomorrow with a new contract for organics processing. And this will allow us to have two haulers. So both organics by gosh would be receiving materials and a new vendor for organics for us at least Texas disposal system. So again, with those two at least tds, we I would assume that we would go ahead and direct all that material for the percentage of material that they're getting organics by is still pretty far out there. So I would still assume that we would utilize a transfer station for that material to get folks back on the routes. A north facility can also help us in times of

[9:55:12 AM]

can also help us in times of storms. We are somewhat limited when we do have storms about where we can put materials. Past few storms, we've had to somewhat commandeer walnut creek park as a dump site, and so we can consolidate material and then haul it out of there that day. It's not something we want to do. We obviously want to have the parks available for park citizens to be able to use that, but this could give us another option to move some of that material that occurs up in south Austin. Drive times. Obviously, if we were able to reduce that, we're going to save on some operational costs. And I think some of the numbers farther in the port kind of demonstrate that. But there will be some additional capital costs when we have to build a facility. So we have to look at both of those things in the operations. And one thing I'll mention a little bit more later is when we did this study, we really just looked at are operations, because we didn't want the scope of the project to get too big and too unwieldy,

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to get too big and too unwieldy, and we did have some pretty tight time limits that we imposed on ourselves to get this done. So. So one thing we haven't done is really enumerated what the savings would be. Some of the general fund and some of the enterprise departments that also direct haul to the landfill for their materials. And, and we can definitely do that. And as we kind of move through this process to, to quantify that. And I think that, you know, the the transfer station also kind of checks a couple boxes when we talk to some of the plans that we have the the city's climate equity plan and its facilitation of trying to get electrification for city vehicles. I mean, this kind of plays right into that. And for the department's comprehensive plan, it actually checks a lot of boxes of additional facilities and also providing electrical infrastructure at a facility, because obviously by the time this would get built, I would expect the technology on electric trucks to be pretty

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on electric trucks to be pretty much on par with where we are with the with the current diesel trucks we are now. So not only this, but our northeast service center, we're putting in a considerable amount of electric charging facilities because we know that's eventually where we're going to end up. So the the financial analysis. So what did we look at, you know, how did this kind of come about. So what we did is, you know, we had to identify some sites across the city and kind of use those for the consultant to, to gauge what kind of type of savings that there would be. What we did, we went actually and went to one of the real estate listings online, and we actually found some properties that were available at the time that would suit our needs, meaning they had to be at least five acres and, and kind of use those. We didn't say, yes, these are the sites we want. And but these were more just kind of placeholders. So we could do some real evaluations to see what the impact was on this. Properties were so pretty

[9:58:14 AM]

this. Properties were so pretty much kind of across northern, northern Austin. So we had Mcneil, Merrill town, Harris branch, brown Laine, burnet road, and we also looked at the Irr property on Todd Laine to do this, where we currently have our Huy facility. None of these properties are listed, at least last time I checked. So they've all been taken up by, you know, the market here can be pretty, pretty fast on certain properties. So but that's okay because really this the methodology of this was really to see if, if we're using the right criteria and factors to determine this. And, and it gives us an opportunity to adjust those, those factors just to make sure the department is in line with community expectations. The sites that were picked were evaluated to determine how each site was impacted by the various factors that influence cost. And so we looked at the routes, how many routes we

[9:59:15 AM]

routes, how many routes we could eliminate, would there be an impact to staffing? If we did have less trucks, we would necessarily have less drivers. But then we also, if we're running the facility, we would have to have staff that to operate that facility. So the analysis looked at that, looked at vehicles and whether we were able to defer purchases or not purchase some vehicles, as well as what the savings would be in fuel maintenance and, and tolls, because we oftentimes traffic is so bad that it's actually more efficient for us to use the toll roads to, to get to our facilities. Construction costs will also look at. So they took into certain considerations of what it would take to develop that facility and the fixed equipment that we required. And then lastly, the operating cost of what it would take to operate that facility. So the evaluation factors that the consultant had come up with, and they work with city staff, and we basically kind of rank

[10:00:16 AM]

and we basically kind of rank these. And it was really just kind of a consensus type operation where we looked at each factor and we kind of gave it a weighted score and where that falls. And, and these are the type of things that we would like to have feedback on, as you know, are the way we set out the the rankings and the priorities. Does that match what the what the community wants? So the good thing about this is we're not looking at a particular property. This is more about the methodology of finding the property. So this is obviously going to be a very challenging process. Not a lot of people want landfills or transfer stations or wastewater facilities or other facilities that may create some issues around them. So we want to be really transparent and really involved in the community and have feedback along each step, because we really don't want any issues. When we get down to doing the final selection of property and going through that process. So I think we're positive we can do this. We've

[10:01:17 AM]

positive we can do this. We've really tried to work just as an example with the northeast service center. We've spent a lot of time attending all the colony park meetings. We've kind of embedded ourselves in that neighborhood. We want to understand their concerns and their their issues. And and then we work to address those. And not only that, but to to provide some community benefits for that facility. We're going to have a community room. We're going to have an area where food trucks can hopefully come. And so neighbors can come and and do that some trails out there. So really trying to to make the the city projects more attractive to the communities because we understand that not everybody wants these facilities. And so what what is the benefit to the community. So that's something that we would obviously do on a site like this and sit with the stakeholders and determine what their needs are and how we can accommodate those. So the evaluation factors, like I said, site conditions, and really those were evaluated for any issues that could increase the design and construction cost.

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design and construction cost. So the Nugen had a subcontractor, park hill, which is an engineering company. They do these types of projects. They build transfer stations. So they did the evaluation on this section. We reviewed any permit permitting or location concerns that could risk the project. You know, if there could have been a the Texas administrative code often has kind of certain areas where you cannot build facilities. So we just want to make sure we did our due diligence and we didn't have a facility that that would be an issue. We wanted to make sure we had readable, accessible utilities. That's a huge cost in construction. So if we're able to find a facility that has that in place already, then we would hope to be able to save on construction costs. Sites were looked at their values on tcad to see the relative value of properties and compare it against one another. And that was used kind of in the

financial analysis. We want to have easy access to highways. You know, ideally we don't want to be in a neighborhood or on a collector

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neighborhood or on a collector street, but more on the larger the larger highways to help facilitate transportation of the materials. We looked at collection route efficiency. And this again kind of looks at the off route mileage and how that is impacted by each site. And then operational cost efficiency is how far the site was to the final disposal site. So how far will that material have to be hauled from the from the transfer station. And then, you know, ultimately we looked at the impact on the surrounding community. You know, what type of impact would this have? What type of environmental justice concerns will we see? We don't want to you know, obviously, we want to try to stay away from residences and from religious institutions and from educational facilities. So these are just some of the things that that we looked at. We also looked at any, any project of this sort has to go through the capital area planning council of governments. They have a solid waste advisory committee. And those

[10:04:19 AM]

advisory committee. And those committees they meet, they'll form a subcommittee, they'll review the information that's been submitted and basically decide if it's in conformance with the regional solid waste plan. There's usually three three responses. They don't necessarily say yes or no to a facility. They just say either a yes. It's in compliance with the plan, or B it's not in compliance with the plan, or C they don't have enough information to to make a call. Capco does not necessarily determine if a facility is needed, but more about the compatibility with land use in the surrounding areas and a sensitive receptor, such as water wells or residences that may be impacted. Next slide is kind of a map that I've as a gis major in school, and this is my best map, but it was the best I could do. So please bear with me on this one so that that long Orange line there kind of in the center that goes from the top of the screen to

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from the top of the screen to the bottom, that's I-35. If you look towards the top of that picture, you'll see that purple zone area plume, if you will. That was basically the location of all the sites that we had found on the real estate listing at the time. It's not necessarily where we're going to put them now. This is just happened to be a snapshot in time. And those were the facilities were just to give you an idea of where they are. Just at the bottom of that purple area, you'll see a recycling symbol, the chasing arrows there in blue. That would be circular services. That's where we take about 60% of our curbside recycling. Just adjacent to that will be our new service center or on Johnny Morris road, that we hope to be breaking ground here next month. So co-located, very close to that facility. If you look further down,

you'll see another red truck there, kind of towards the lower center of that picture. That's our Todd Laine facility. That's where we currently have our only operational service center.

[10:06:21 AM]

operational service center. South of that you'll see a trash can looks like an apple core and a chasing arrows. Again, that would be the facility that we utilize for our trash and recycling at this point. And pending your approval tomorrow for our organics contract, we would also begin hauling organics to that facility to the right of the the red truck. There on Todd Laine, you'll see a TRE. That TRE is Hornsby bend. So any material that doesn't have food waste in it, since it is so close and there is a need for them to have that material as a bulking agent for their biosolids, we try to deliver that material, usually large brush and everything that's without food. And then if you look to the far right out there, almost on the edge of the screen, that other apple core that is organics, by gosh. And that's the one that we're having really difficulty getting to because of the traffic impact of everyone heading out that area to go home in the evenings. But the, you know, the consultants basic

[10:07:22 AM]

you know, the consultants basic findings on this was the closer it is to our Johnny Morris facility up north and to the routes up there, it will provide the greatest financial return. So that's strictly looking at it from a financial standpoint, doesn't take into account the political realities that we'll have to deal with as well. So this picture, this is Seattle north and this this is another facility that we visited a few years ago on that same trip with the factoria one. And I would consider this to be the bar that we want to to meet. So this is a a facility that is surrounded by million dollar homes. It basically occupies a square city block in a in a residential area. Kind of where we would be standing in that picture. The terrain kind of raises up. It goes a little bit higher beyond that building there. It kind of goes down towards the the waterway there,

[10:08:23 AM]

towards the the waterway there, and you can kind of see the bridge. So but they did a lot of work to really make sure that this facility had no impact to the neighborhood. So there are some air control filters on the building that filter the air for both the employees that work in it, and any air that leaves the facility. They also do have a scenting type, lavender type. I think they can change the flavors or whatever. But I think last time we were there, it was kind of a lavender. So it kind of has a a pleasant smell outside. But even when that wasn't on there, you could not smell any trash. The building is totally enclosed. It has doors that rapidly rise and close after each door to minimize any escape of dust, noise or odors. They have a meticulous litter program, so they actually have an agreement with the

surrounding neighborhood that they will actually walk around the facility. They document every piece of trash there. They the location, what it was, the time it was found. So they have a greater understanding of any

[10:09:25 AM]

greater understanding of any impacts that they're having outside the facility and that they can address those appropriately. And they share that information with the neighborhood. So. The part of the construction of this project also added some additional amenities to the neighborhood. You can kind of see a basketball court there. There's actually a park that's across the street that you really can't see from this one. And it has an education center. And I was really amazed. So while we were doing our tours there, there was actually people walking into the transfer station, into the education viewing area where you can come up and there's a lot of displays about recycling and land filling and just solid waste in general. But then there's a big viewing window. So there was a lot of mothers with their children and baby carriages and younger children, and they would come there as part of their day because it's kind of on their walk. And, and obviously the, the younger kids are just fascinated by the trucks and

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fascinated by the trucks and all the action there. So but I think it's a really good way to help educate the public on what we do and to prove that, you know, you know, not necessarily in this case because the transfer station, but if there's recycling in there that recycling is getting done. And it's because often we hear that myth that, you know, only 9% of recycling gets, gets recycled and and it's all getting thrown away. And we try to dispel those myths to the best we can. So I think it's a good opportunity to to do that. And I think we want to try to increase the educational awareness of, of our citizens so they really understand why we need these facilities and, and why we do what we do. So the financial results basically come back that, you know, the city is going to need to enter into some sort of contractual agreement with either a private hauler or another political jurisdiction to make this to at least break even or make, make make money on the project. So depending on where the site is

[10:11:28 AM]

depending on where the site is located, the one that was closest to our new service center up on Johnny Morris had the greatest return almost broke even. In fact, according to the to the consultant's numbers. But there, as we move farther and farther away from that facility, the cost go up incrementally because there's additional costs. So that's something else that we have to factor into, especially when we're considering environmental justice issues. And just we don't want to just go for the lowest thing and the worst neighborhoods. So we want to make sure that we're doing the right thing and that there's a

balance and that we're not overburdening one community with additional facilities. One of the alternative analysis that the consultant did do was if we did not build as big a facility as we had proposed on the other locations, if it was a smaller facility, we would actually be able to break even and actually save some money on the on our operations. This would require only solid waste

[10:12:30 AM]

would require only solid waste or excuse me, only Irr vehicles to use it. We wouldn't be able to open to the public because we would have to downsize facility just to make it cost effective, but that doesn't mean we couldn't expand that facility in the future as we as long as we have enough land to do so. So kind of next steps, you know, always the optimist. We don't have any property yet, but hopefully in fall we're going to come back to you with a property and, and and have that discussion. Ideally we'd like to have these facilities, this facility operational by 2030. And for the reason of by 2030, our 30 year landfill contract will be up. Our recycling contract that's been 20 plus years will also be expiring that same year. And then the organics contract that will that you all will be voting on tomorrow will also expire about that time. So in

[10:13:30 AM]

expire about that time. So in 2030, if we have a transfer station up and running, it opens up a lot more vendors that we could potentially have bid on the project. And hopefully that increase competition can help us keep our prices, keep our rates down lower. Last slide. Just questions. And I've been doing research on the department for the northeast service center, where I have been to Austin energy's facility. And they have that great project connect room with the history. And I was just blown away by it. And I, I questioned, why don't we have this? And nobody really had an answer. Says, well, we're going to have it. So we're going to put something similar up on Johnny Morris. But I've been doing a lot of research on the department. I've been able to go back to. The first document I found was 1875, where the mayor was complaining about the sanitary conditions in the city. So problems have been around a long time. The city has also, you know, done a lot of work. And I've seen throughout the years how the city has always

[10:14:30 AM]

years how the city has always had to kind of move around. We it was funny because back back in the day, we didn't necessarily city didn't have landfills per se. We had dumps and these were places really where material was brought and then burned. So but we wouldn't buy the facilities. Landowners would offer their property up. So whenever an offer a citizen would offer their property, and if it was in the right location, the city would, would, would do it, pay them rent, the material would be burned until

eventually neighbors around complained. And then the city stopped, found another site, did the same thing until that one complained. So we've been kind of kicking the can around the city, so we want to get out of that. We want to have some facilities that we own, that we control. So we have a little bit better destiny of our of our operations. But this truck here was one of our first trucks, I believe that truck is dumping at the the city incinerator when we had one, and I think this was at 12th. And Hargrave, obviously we no longer have that facility, but

[10:15:31 AM]

longer have that facility, but I just thought it was a great picture to add in there. And with that councilmember, I'll be happy to answer any questions. >> Very good. Are there any questions on the panel here? More with councilmember duchen. That was very, very thorough. >> Thank you. Director, this is a lot of information. >> To process. I'm wondering, are there any of the financials that the consultant produced that you were able to share with us? Did they run different scenarios based on? You mentioned a lot of variability here, like how far away you are from Johnny Morris, because the 20,000 to almost \$1 million variance, that's a lot for us to consider in a time where, at least from where I'm sitting, every dollar is precious. And then you also talk about advantages in the future, you know, in 2030 when those contracts are up, have any of those been quantified in any way? I'm just curious how how detailed of an analysis and projection they did. Did they run different scenarios? Can you expand on that? >> Yeah. As far as the 2030, we haven't done any analysis that

[10:16:33 AM]

haven't done any analysis that because we just don't know where those locations will be. >> I would imagine somebody could make some assumptions though, in pencil and some numbers and try and figure out what the what the potential cost savings, if any, of renegotiating those contracts or having closer vendors or whatever that looks like. >> And I think, yeah, there are limited vendors so we could run some scenarios. And I think really we would run those scenarios regardless. Just so we have an idea of operating costs and the size of the facility that we want to to have, because if we determine that we're going to be taking a lot more material to the facility, we're going to need a bigger facility. The first part of your question. >> Was really just to the extent you can share the consultant. >> Yeah. So I believe there was an attachment. I think the report was actually one of the attachments in the, in your packet. So and it does have all the finances and numbers. >> So I will spend. >> But if there's questions that you come across here later about that just feel free to reach out okay. >> We'll I'll spend some time with that and may follow up on

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with that and may follow up on that and I guess. I mean, it sounds like on balance, the perception I got from listening to your testimony, the briefing was that this is something you want to move forward in. You feel like it helps control the destiny of give the city more options in the future. The only question Marc then, that I have is regarding the cost. And does that give you any pause or knowing that there may be a upwards of \$1 million hit to the city budget or your budget going forward, depending on how, what property you buy and all? You know how big that facility is, all those variables that you laid out. >> Yeah, definitely an issue, especially especially with us having to go through the northeast service center now and that capital outlay that we have to do to that the benefit of, of the transfer station is we would be able to bring in additional revenue from private haulers, so that could help offset some of the costs. And we do definitely have some operational savings in there. So I think we're comfortable with with moving forward with it. Obviously the location is

[10:18:33 AM]

it. Obviously the location is going to be a big driver as to the cost. So that's something that we're going to have to work on. I think to like I said earlier, we could be able to perhaps start out smaller and not have that big impact because I'm very sensitive. Phase it, phase it. Yeah, maybe start out with a smaller facility. And then once we realize, you know, that we can add on and we have the resources to do that, do that. We just need to make sure that the property we buy can accommodate that. >> Okay. Well, I will plan on spending some time with the the numbers in your memo, and I'll look forward to whatever you share with us in the fall of regarding the properties you're able to identify. >> One thing I will mention because of the scope of the service, you know, we didn't take into account other city departments, so there would be some additional savings for the general fund. >> That's reflected or not. >> Is not reflected in here. But we were kind of we were trying to get this done pretty quick, and we had to bring in all the departments. Things tend to go a little bit slower just because getting information back. So I would call this the worst case

[10:19:34 AM]

call this the worst case scenario. So I think we will see some benefits not only to city departments, but the private haulers that use it and just the general public, because right now they're having to drive much farther distances to get rid of materials. >> I mean, I know it's hopefully not a lot of energy, but if there's a way to quantify some of that stuff as you bring this back in the fall with those properties, it might be helpful for us to understand at least how you're looking at the potential cost savings of some of the things you identified, but aren't yet incorporated into actual numbers. >> Yeah, now that we have newton's model, we can definitely get that information. We have a little bit more time to do that. So I think we want to have a full cost understanding when we are ready to pull the trigger. >> That would be great. Thank you so much. >> Councilmember Siegel. >> Thank you, chair and thanks, director, for this great conversation. Just want to kind of follow up on two things in regards to what was presented. I

guess the first is a potential benefit of the transfer station relates to customer service, and that customers could bring items to

[10:20:35 AM]

customers could bring items to the transfer station for disposal. Do you know if this service is included in the financial analysis and personnel costs, or would that would we have to add personnel to kind of facilitate this customer interaction? >> So I think staffing wise, I think we had ten positions for the transfer station, and that would accommodate that 126,000 tons per year that they had projected. So we that some of that material would be considered from the public as well. >> And do you think this is one of the questions my staff developed would anticipate a replication of all the services that are currently available at the recycle reuse center? >> That would be our hope, because we want people to be able to come there and we really see this as a community benefit. I know a lot of folks, if it's put next to your house, you're not going to see it that way. But, you know, especially with our toddling facility on business center drive, there are drop off center. We have a lot of folks from the surrounding community come to get free things. Not only cleaners that are good, paint that is still good. People drop

[10:21:36 AM]

that is still good. People drop off boxes of tiles. And so these things are all taken away. Plus a lot of excess mulch that we grind out of Hornsby bend. We have sometimes we generate more than they can use. We bring that over as well. So people are allowed to get that at no cost. So again we see this as a benefit. And I think we just need to to make sure we're able to elaborate that to the to the communities that we're looking at. >> That would be great. I know in north Austin we like some mulch, so that'd be a good service. And then kind of the other line of questioning is about in the new gen report, they make reference to an EPA environmental justice screening and mapping reports tool. And actually, when I followed the link in the in the report, it goes to kind of a dead tool. And I don't know if the government has taken that tool down, but I wanted to see if it was possible for us to get access to how a new gen used that tool. And kind of the context is we want to

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context is we want to anticipate the community impact Wright of this kind of development and how we can evaluate the impacts and mitigate any negative impacts. And so wondering if there's like the data that new gen gathered if regarding this EPA tool. If we could look at that. >> Yeah, absolutely. We can get that information. And from my understanding the ej tool really does kind of identifies areas that may have other environmental justice issues. So I think it's really more of a an indicator that more research needs to be done. If we're over that 80 percentile, that's what we need to start digging in and see what

what other issues is community facing. And is this something that is going to create more issues. So again, we're definitely in tune with this. And we we we want this to be a facility that all of Austin can be proud of. And and like I said, it's not going to be your typical. Throw a county name out there. But one of your local counties around here, some of the smaller facilities that are that are exposed and,

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that are that are exposed and, you know, and there are issues. So, you know, one thing the solid waste industry has done, and we haven't been regulated for a whole long time. You know, you know, regulation started in the 60s and a few in the 70s and really in the 90s when the subtitle D amendments were promulgated. And that's really kind of dictated like location restrictions on landfills and those type of things. So the industry really hasn't been regulated until recently. So a lot of the facilities have been grandfathered in and probably aren't the, you know, the best facilities. But we want to make sure that this like Seattle public utilities, Seattle north station is really kind of a model for what can be done. >> That's great, and I would love to get to that kind of, you know, quality of of facility. So yeah, if you have that backup information we'd love to see it about the ej tool. Thanks, chair. >> Very good. Well appreciate the update. Hope to see you again this fall before council. With that property in hand. But I was just commenting before, next time I'm in the Seattle area I'm going to try to make

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area I'm going to try to make it to their transfer station and just see it in person. What that's like, because I've heard from a number of people that it really is not what you think. >> It's it's it's pretty amazing. So I was really impressed when I saw it. So it kind of changed my mind of how it transportation could operate. So and one of my, my former boss, director snipes, was actually instrumental in getting that facility up and running. So, right, we have a good resource within the city to to tap if needed. >> Absolutely. Very good. Well appreciate it. With that, we will go to item number three here. Which is a briefing update on rain to river and. I know watershed busy. We were we heard from y'all yesterday. We get to hear from you today. >> Good morning council members.

[10:25:40 AM]

>> Good morning council members. >> Good morning. >> I'm the deputy director of watershed. I'm filling in for George morales, our director, who's out today. Thank you for having us to present on the development of our rain to river strategic plan and planning process. As you know, watershed protection's mission is to reduce the impact of flooding, erosion and water pollution throughout our community. We've been guided in this mission through our current master plan, first adopted by council almost 25 years ago and periodically updated over the years. As recent flood events have shown us.

Once again, central Texas is particularly vulnerable to flash flooding, and it is vital that we have a comprehensive and up to date strategic plan that will help us guide our efforts and minimize the risk of harm in the future. You'll be hearing today from Aaron wood, our planning team program manager, and sorry Alborno, our senior planner on our planning team. They'll provide an update on why we're undertaking such a major

[10:26:41 AM]

undertaking such a major overhaul of our master plan goals of this new plan. Timeline, summary of prior activities and remaining steps, and then especially focus in and describe in some detail our community engagement efforts. So without further ado, I'll turn it over to Aaron and sorry. >> Thank you so much. Son. Yeah. Okay. Thank you for having us today. It's all said. My name is Aaron wood. I lead our watershed planning team and watershed protection. And so we're super excited today to give an update about the project, community engagement and what we've heard so far in the current survey effort we have going on as we speak. All right. So what is rain river? It's the catchy name for our department's strategic plan for watershed protection. We have an existing strategic plan, the watershed protection master plan, that was adopted by council in 2001. So it's been it's been a minute. So you know

[10:27:43 AM]

it's been a minute. So you know that that plan hasn't been updated and adopted by council in over 20 years. So we're really going through a major overhaul and update of the plan. So this plan serves will serve. And the current one does serve as the guiding blueprint for our department. It sets our mission. The new plan will set our vision and values for the department. It will talk about our goals and objectives for the next ten years. It will help establish a decision making framework that kind of moves beyond just technical risk, like the current plan looks at, but also factoring in equity and climate change and community voice as we evaluate and prioritize solutions. And then it will be a communication tool. If you've looked at the current plan, it's over 400 pages long. It's very dense and full of a lot of math. And so we really want this to be a more streamlined version that can serve as a tool, you know, both to staff and to policymakers and also to the community. All right. So why are we updating the plan? The

[10:28:46 AM]

are we updating the plan? The biggest reason, as I mentioned, is, you know, the original one was updated in 2001. You know, we weren't involved directly in those efforts. But speaking anecdotally with the staff that worked on at the time, the community engagement effort around that plan didn't really prioritize gathering input from the full diversity of Austin's residents. It was more of kind of the typical meetings at city hall, like a phone survey. And so knowing that we wanted to to really look at doing

more robust and inclusive community engagement this time around, especially since it's been almost 25 years. So there have been some revisions to the plan over the last couple of decades. They've been mostly ad hoc. They've been focused on largely updating technical information. So those kind of minor updates have gone to the environmental commission for their approval. They haven't come back to council since they've been amendments to the existing plan. So yeah, the plan is almost 25 years old. It doesn't address a lot of major challenges that we're currently facing climate change, population growth,

[10:29:46 AM]

change, population growth, systemic racism. So there's a lot of work to be done in catching up on what's how Austin has grown and changed over the last almost 25 years. And we've learned a lot. We have a lot of knowledge and experience, both in the community and with staff and, you know, the city organization that we want to be able to pull into the plan. We have a lot of, you know, additional city plans, water forward, the climate equity plan, our parks, our future that we want to make sure to incorporate into our goals and objectives going forward. And then one of the other key differences is that the current plan doesn't set time specific targets. It's not established as a ten or 20 or 30 year plan. It's just the department's master plan. So a lot of the goals were just like, get everyone out of the floodplain, or no low water crossings and things like that that are aspirational but not necessarily actionable on a. Kind of shorter timeline. And so we wanted to establish this as a ten year plan, set time specific targets for those ten years so that we can really demonstrate to the community

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demonstrate to the community that we're making measurable progress. All right. So our goals for this update. So as I mentioned, we really wanted to go out to the community and do some really kind of relationship building deep listening to make sure that we're reflecting community values in this new plan. You know, the priorities of the community, their needs, their knowledge and lived experience, and that we're really pulling that into the plan, as well as the knowledge and experience of staff and just, you know, our partner organizations around town. So Sade will talk here in a second about kind of that extensive engagement effort that we've done around this plan. And then, as I mentioned, you know, there's there's some definite gaps, you know, wanting to make sure that we're advancing equity in department operations, that we're, you know, achieving equitable outcomes for all austinites wanting to make sure that climate resilience and adaptation is front and center, and then also really wanting to focus in on groups that are most vulnerable to watershed

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most vulnerable to watershed impacts in terms of exposure and ability to recover, knowing that, you know, a foot of flooding doesn't impact everyone in the community in the same way that some folks, your car might get flooded out in the street and you have to take off from work in the morning and take it into the shop and get it looked at. And some folks, you know, they miss work, they lose their job. It can have a much more devastating kind of long term financial impact, depending on, you know, where in town you're located and kind of your life circumstances. And then, as I mentioned, we want the plan to be really accessible and informative. We want it to be kind of visually engaging and really kind of tell the story of the department and help people see what we do and where we're headed. All right. So our engagement approach. We developed a community engagement plan for this project. And really kind of set some intentional goals of how we want to approach it. First

[10:32:49 AM]

we want to approach it. First and foremost, we wanted to be respectful to participants. We wanted to make it really easy and enjoyable to contribute input. We wanted to be really transparent about how people's input would be used. We wanted to tailor the most appropriate strategies to different groups or topics, and use an iterative process so that we're checking back in. I will say part of that, being respectful of participants and making it easy to contribute input involved compensation of our ambassadors of focus groups and really paying people for their time. If they were investing kind of more heavily than taking just a ten minute survey. We wanted this to be a really adaptive process. And so we set some metrics for engagement. You're really trying to get to demographic representation across the city. So tracking our performance, evaluating gaps and then using different strategies to try and address those. And then really working a lot with other organizations both within the city collaborating on engagement efforts, but also a number of different partner organizations which Sade will speak more to here in a second. And then most

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here in a second. And then most importantly, focused on relationships. So we didn't want this to be an extractive kind of process where we just got in like got what we needed to know and got out. We really wanted this to be focused on building long term relationships and trust with the community. This was just kind of the first step in a much longer journey. And so, you know, creating these systems to gather input from people, but continuing to check in, continuing to kind of have that two way street of us providing information and resources along the way. So as we develop that community engagement plan, one thing that we looked at doing is really looking at. Different stakeholders and who had been kind of historically left out of our planning processes and really wanting to make sure that we, as watershed staff, dedicated extra time and resources to reach those groups so that we were really kind of getting to the full diversity of Austin as we were doing our

[10:34:49 AM]

of Austin as we were doing our engagement. So we organized these different groups of priority stakeholders, one being underserved groups. So folks who had been kind of systematically marginalized, denied a full opportunity to participate in our past processes. You know, sometimes even in this room, we would meet here at 11 A.M. On a Friday. And if you could come down and give input like, great, if you had to work like oops. And so really wanted to be a lot more intentional in how we were reaching out to those groups. So anyone who was more likely to experience negative quality of life outcomes in the city, you know, people of color, low income communities, the unhoused community, immigrant and refugee communities, people with disabilities, kind of a large array of different underserved groups. We also wanted to reach out to impacted groups so residents who have experienced or an increased risk of experience, impacts of negative watershed outcomes, you know, especially flooding. Also, erosion and water pollution. And then the third one would be organizations with relevant expertise. And so for

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relevant expertise. And so for this one as well, you know, we have a lot of traditional environmental partners that we've worked with for decades. And so we've brought them into the fold, but also trying to kind of expand our scope and look at community health organizations and other community groups that we are able to partner with and help leverage their networks and get kind of deeper engagement across the community. And then we'll speak to we have a number of strategies to just reach the full Austin community. We definitely want to hear from everyone about what they have to say. This was just where we invested our extra time and resources and staff. All right, so this is our project timeline. We first kicked off phase one of community engagement back in 2022. So initially that was going to be a one year process. You will go through all the different strategies that we programed into that during the middle of that phase, there was a decision made that it would be beneficial to bring on a consultant team. We had originally looked at doing the

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originally looked at doing the entire effort in-house, but there are a number of benefits, you know, that we thought a consultant could bring in terms of kind of outside the box strategic thinking, as well as some more kind of firepower on data data analytics. And so we went through the rfp process, and that was about an 18 month process. So if you're looking at this timeline and saying like, wow, like they were they were at this for a while, we were going through that procurement process. But the silver lining of that is that we got to extend phase one and really dig into where those gaps were and then go through. We went to about additional 10 to 15 focus groups with different organizations and populations around town, and really were able to get a lot of deeper and more inclusive engagement than we would have if

we'd stuck to the original timeline. So it allowed us to pivot and kind of really get even more richer data from the community as part of that process. So our consultant team, which is led by Jordan McCallum,

[10:37:51 AM]

which is led by Jordan McCallum, also includes bend collaborative, geosyntec and measure Austin. So they came on board in spring of 2024 for a two year contract. One thing you know, we really loved about them was they were, you know, kind of definitely brought a community centered approach. They had recommended bringing on board a community activation group, which I'll speak more to here in a little bit about how that was set up, but that they stood that up and fall of 2024. And that's been a group of community leaders that's been advising and making recommendations on the plan and community priorities for the last year or so. And then summer of 2025, here we are in phase two of community engagement. So we went out in phase one and really asked people what they wanted to see from watershed, what their values were, what their vision was for Austin going forward. In phase two. Y'all are having already today, you know, acknowledgment of difficult budget issues. You know, we're all in a resource constrained environment right now. And so

[10:38:51 AM]

environment right now. And so really going back to the community and saying we have to make some tough choices, so help us prioritize how we should allocate our time and our resources and our staff. What are the key priorities we really want to invest in and advance over the next ten years? And so we'll speak to the specifics of that phase. But we're closing in on September 15th, our community survey, which I'm excited to say, as we were sitting here earlier, we hit a thousand participants. And so we were excited to hit that milestone and go even further by mid September. So yeah, the the consultant and the community activation group and our staff, technical experts are fervently working on developing content for the plan so that we can, this winter, come back and share the draft plan with the community. So both kind of going to our trusted community partners and using them as a sounding board for folks that have been, you know, along for the whole way, but also sharing it out with the community to get their

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the community to get their thoughts, bring it to environmental commission. We'd love to come back to this committee if y'all would have us, and then ultimately to council for adoption in spring of 2026. With that, I'm going to pass it over to Sade to share more about our engagement. >> All right. Okay. Is this on? No. There you go. All right. Green means on. Thank you. Aaron. Thanks for having me. So as Aaron mentioned, now I'm going to take you on a little bit of a deeper dive into the community engagement

process to date for winter river. So first I'm going to share with you a little bit about what we did during that first phase Aaron mentioned, which took place between the spring of 2022 and the fall of 2023. So here on this slide, you see a rundown of the strategies that we used during that phase to gather input and invite people to engage with us. So some of these we used in order to cast a wide net, to really hear from everybody and anybody in Austin, and then some of them on the right side are were intended to

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right side are were intended to go deeper, to spend that extra effort to reach the people that have not historically been part of the part of watershed's planning processes. So those priority stakeholder groups, so the broad engagement, the wide net, we used a a website to keep people apprized of the project that's still up. You can visit reindeer river. Com to learn about the project in more depth. We used a community survey to gather responses. We ended up getting many responses more than 2000 responses, many mapped points of specific ideas and problems, and and things that people liked. We promoted that through a variety of ways. We put yard signs and strategic community spaces. So at pools, at trailheads, at recreation centers to try to get people's attention and get them to take the survey. We also broadcast it via social media and radio ads. We also worked with a consultant, etc. To help us do a statistically valid survey. They used a random sampling

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They used a random sampling method. They mailed an an invitation to take the survey to people's home addresses to ensure that we could get a statistically valid sample of respondents, and use that to validate the results of our community survey. We got feedback from that consultant that we did a pretty good job getting demographic representation in that first community survey for the focused engagement. As Aaron mentioned before, we used focus groups. We worked with measure, that same consultant that's on our current consultant team, which is a black woman led, racial equity focused data consultant consultant to lead five of those focus groups. And then we were able to partner with a variety of organizations like Austin youth, riverwatch and uts, whole communities, whole health project, and several others to do 11 additional focus groups that were focused on kind of specific demographic groups that we wanted to make sure we heard from. We also brought on

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heard from. We also brought on ten community ambassadors who conducted one on one interviews with members of their own community networks. Those community ambassadors came from that first priority group of underserved Austin residents. We were able to gather a lot of kind of more in-depth data that way. We used a similar model with organizations, so we gave \$5,000 mini grants to six

grassroots local organizations who helped us gather community input, either through one on one interviews, through block walking through their own surveys, through, in one case, like filmed interviews. So we kind of deferred to them about what they thought would be the best way to reach their network and then ask them to ask key questions that we had in that way. We also mailed postcards to more than 90,000 addresses and in high flood risk areas to promote the community vision survey. So that was to that second priority group of people at risk of watershed impacts. And then we also brought our brought ourselves and the survey to people where they were at community events, where

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were at community events, where we thought we would reach those priority stakeholder groups. We also did a lot of intentional meetings with community leaders in order to build and strengthen relationships. We did that kind of in advance of the beginning of that first phase, and then as it rolled out, to allow us to discover pathways to reach the folks that we really wanted to make sure we we heard from, that we might not otherwise. We also did a couple of surveys with Austin homeless advisory committee. Unhoused folks are part of that first priority group and also the second one. So historically underserved austinites also folks more likely to be impacted by severe weather events and especially flooding. So these are a few pictures from that first phase of engagement on the upper left. I'm trying to decide if it's mirror. What? But yeah, on that upper left corner you'll see some of our cohort of ambassadors in the middle tabling with one of our partner organizations, del valle community coalition. On the right. We were staff and

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right. We were staff and volunteers were gathering resource kits that we gave out to folks. That queer Topia, one of our partner organizations, where we're handing out at encampments to folks experiencing homelessness. And then on the bottom, you'll see ambassadors sharing with our steering committee some of their findings. One thing that we learned from previous engagement done by fellow departments, specifically the the office of sustainability at the time when they did their community climate ambassador program, they gave us feedback that everyone had really hoped for more opportunities for the ambassadors to interface directly with decision makers. So we really tried to make space for that. And this presentation was one of those opportunities. And then you'll see on the right a focus group that we did with some residents at foundation communities. And so, yeah, and then a tabling event. And so we definitely encourage you, if you're interested, to learn a little bit more about what we heard in

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bit more about what we heard in phase one, I'll be going into some detail about some of the insights we gained. But at ranger river atx on the what we heard tab, you can find three reports that we put together. One of them is a community ambassador report, kind of synthesizing what we heard from the community through those ambassadors. There's a story map format report from the partner organizations. That's the listening and collaboration. And then measure put together a report and a timeline that summarized the findings from their focus groups that they did. So, as Aaron mentioned, we also launched a community activation group in the fall of 2024 with the help of our consultant team. And so this is a group that's comprised of about 20 community leaders who have expertise in the environment, community health and or disaster preparedness and recovery, and also who come from diverse backgrounds. So they are engaged for a one year

[10:46:58 AM]

they are engaged for a one year period. So we're actually about to wrap up that year with the final meeting in October. And measure is the one who who kind of helped convene and is facilitating the conversations that this group is having, and they've really been helping to shape kind of some of the the meaty parts of the plan. They're helping us work through things like synthesizing the input that we got from phase one to develop a set of community priorities and a vision statement. They helped us do a community asset mapping activity that's going to help set watershed up, to implement the river plan more effectively and in a way that involves community more deeply. And by community assets, we mean existing mission aligned community groups and initiatives. That's what they helped us map. And they're also helping us. Or they already helped us design and they're helping us to broadcast the current community survey that we have going until September 15th. So moving back into phase one for a moment, we wanted to

[10:48:00 AM]

one for a moment, we wanted to share some of the themes and priorities that we identified from the feedback that we received through that effort. So I'm just going to be kind of going through these. So the consultant team helped us to synthesize that feedback that we gathered in phase one, and they identified ten priorities and actions desired by the community. And we brought these ten community priorities and actions to the community activation group and asked them to give us feedback on the accuracy and the importance of the priorities. So we asked them, do these resonate with your own experience and then help us to to put these in priority order? So the order that I'm presenting them here is that priority order that the the cag advised us is correct. So the first one is equity and inclusion. So ensure access to sorry, ensure historically underserved communities have equitable access to resources and decision making processes. The second one is flooding and mitigation and emergency preparedness. Sorry flood mitigation and emergency

[10:49:00 AM]

mitigation and emergency preparedness. So yeah, protect lives and property by addressing flooding and erosion proactively. The third one is integrate climate adaptation strategies to address drought, extreme heat and habitat loss. Oh, and sorry for the the second priority. The cag advised us that that should actually be two separate things flood mitigation and emergency preparedness, which we noted. The fourth one is preserve, restore and enhance Austin's creeks, Lakes and natural spaces. The fifth is build trust through transparency, active listening and community centered initiatives. Next is ensure natural spaces are safe, inviting and accessible for all residents. Then balance urban growth with environmental health and sustainability. Provide resources and safety for unhoused individuals while addressing systemic issues. Provide resources and safety.

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Provide resources and safety. So the same one. Sorry. Sorry that got messed up somehow. Education and youth engagement. So foster a culture of environmental stewardship and resilience among residents. And then finally innovation and leadership. So position Austin as a model city for environmental stewardship and Progressive practices. Okay, so back to the current phase. We are now, as we've been mentioning, in another active phase of engagement, our asked to the community now is you've told us what you want us to do now, help us decide how we prioritize our limited time staff and funding. Tell us what you want us to do most. And so our goal is to reach all Austin residents, which we're including people that live, work and play in Austin in that group, and again, with special

[10:51:02 AM]

group, and again, with special efforts to hear from the priority stakeholder groups that we have been focusing on throughout. So the name of the survey is your voice shaping our priorities, and you can find it at rainey.com. One note we've translated it into the most commonly spoken languages in Austin. As part of that effort to hear from as many people as possible in lower barriers to participation. And. Yeah, in addition to the the survey, we're also. We're also doing a couple of focus groups to help us explore particular themes with certain groups that we want to make sure that we that we hear from. So. So that is all. Now we'd love to answer questions. Thank you. >> Very good. Well that was yeah. I'm always amazed at all the outreach that y'all are doing. But throughout our departments we are really intentional and meaningful when

[10:52:02 AM]

intentional and meaningful when we engage with the public. And it's it's never not impressive. So very, very good work. Committee members. Any questions? Vice chair Ellis. >> I'm very curious about the level of detail that it might go into. I'm thinking about erosion control in particular, you know, how will this dovetail with other other city plans and priorities to make sure that as we're revegetating, as we're planting trees and, you know, pollinator plants, how will this advise us kind of how to accomplish that goal? Obviously, we could come up with our own TRE canopy plans and figure out how we want to, you know, work within our own right of way. But I'm very curious, you know, how you look at the equity inclusion component of this and look at communities that are suffering from flooding, and will it help guide us through the process of how to mitigate those impacts? >> Yeah, I'll make sure I touch on all those pieces. We've definitely had a lot of discussions around the level of

[10:53:03 AM]

discussions around the level of granularity in the document, because the current one is 400 pages, you know, over 100 of us just listing every possible solution we could ever do and realizing that some of that content is better suited for kind of separate locations, you know, wanting to build more of an interactive database so people can see all the different types of solutions and query that kind of like we've done with our gogreen plant guide now online, but that that's not maybe the best use of real estate in the plan. And so we've talked about, you know, a couple different products kind of well yeah kind of spinning off of that. So one being just sort of if it's educational material, having that, you know, accessible on the website, but having kind of high level like what is watershed do within the plan to give people enough context without taking up too much space. Then in terms of prioritization for something like erosion, wanting to kind of split that out and having the high level way that we identify and prioritize erosion,

[10:54:03 AM]

identify and prioritize erosion, what those impacts are, the formulas themselves would be pulled into a technical report. And so living online, if people really want to dig in and see the exact way that we do that, then we would have, as we currently do, dashboards where people can interact with what the highest priority erosion sites are around the city, near the, you know, the most severe ones. And kind of we have some additional dashboards that build out kind of how we're addressing that, either through capital projects or in-house. So yeah, wanting to, you know, kind of lean into our visual storytelling where we can. But having we've kind of made this analogy of the code versus the criteria and the plan. So wanting to make those commitments to the community clear intent that's adopted by council and will guide us for the next ten years, and having the more kind of granular, detailed information about how we'll get that done live in either a technical report or the consultant is also building an implementation plan that will be kind of the first iteration that watershed will continue. To work through and update as we hit our objectives.

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update as we hit our objectives. As we look at kind of an agile approach of like, well, this isn't really working, like, how do we want to fix that? So one thing that we're actually talking with the community activation group next week is how they continue, how the community continues to be involved in those conversations. We don't want to really just adopt the plan and then be like, watershed is going to go do implementation over here. How do we continue to build on that? Those relationships and that kind of more robust, inclusive approach in pulling community into planning and policy decisions going forward, making sure we update the plan on a much more regular cadence. But yeah, like looking at the process we're making on those objectives, you know, what our work plan is for addressing them and then having the community give us feedback so we can continue to adjust the plan going forward. The other one was about equity and flooding, right? >> It was all one question. Okay. >> There are a couple different. >> I think you've hit the points really well, but I was just thinking primarily around water, cleanliness and how to make sure that you know what is running off of our roads when

[10:56:07 AM]

running off of our roads when it rains is being filtered before it ends up in the creeks. You know, those are some of the things I've been thinking about a lot lately is, you know, there's there's lots of folks that, you know, you go to one part of town and you see everything's very green and clean, and you go to other parts of town and people say, why, you know, why are we getting things that are unfairly kind of drifting their way down to us? And people don't, you know, we don't have an implementation plan to make sure that the health of the creeks and the neighborhoods near the creeks are getting the same level of care. And I want to make sure that as as we look through that, we're thinking about, you know, the runoff, the erosion control debris in the creeks, you know, some of those plans. And I just want to make sure everything's kind of fitting tightly together since you're going through all this amazing work to get this feedback. >> Yes, absolutely. And that's a really great point. And something that we've seen even with the city did a green infrastructure gaps and strengths assessment a few years ago that really highlighted a lot of those disparities in conservation, land and TRE canopy and waterway health between Austin

[10:57:08 AM]

waterway health between Austin and east Austin. So I think, you know, to the extent it's within our zone of control, our plan will definitely be making commitments around addressing some of those disparities. But I think, you know, kind of building into the work that's being done with the climate implementation plan and the city's resilience framework, and also the city wide strategic plan of how do we partner

more effectively with parks and recreation and Austin water and some of these other kind of major land managers around the city to build in more infiltration of stormwater into the soil, more restoration of trees and vegetation along our waterways for more kind of shaded riparian areas all across town. So people have access to that kind of cooling space, especially in the heat of the summer.%-p>> That's great. I know we're talking about street trees lately and the mobility committee. And so I'm hoping all these conversations, you know, all the work that's going in to make these amazing plans, making sure they kind of self-reference and kind of all point to each other to make

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point to each other to make sure that we're actually streamlining our goals and, you know, making the most of the time and the dollars that we do have. Thanks. >> Yeah. >> Mr. Siegel. >> Thanks, chair, and thanks for this presentation. Really appreciated learning about the community engagement and how you kind of empowered community groups to take on more engagement and have these layered strategies, wanted to kind of speak up for my district a little bit. And I think council member duChen as well, you know, the microburst had a really strong impact on certain parts of town. And so I wanted to see if you all have a sense of whether you've adequately gotten kind of that new feedback from neighborhoods and communities that were impacted by the microburst, or whether more outreach is needed in that area. >> That is such a good question. >> We haven't drilled down into the data to specifically look at which neighborhoods were most impacted by the microburst and how well they're represented in the survey, but I will say that your district is the most represented among participants so far. Almost 20% of the participants are in d7. So I think there was a lot.

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So I think there was a lot. >> Less d7. >> There was a lot of impact in that district, right? Yes. I mean, I don't know if there's any correlation there, but. >> And we saw that spike in the survey like pretty, pretty fast. It wasn't kind of delayed to the July 4th event. Like we saw that as soon as the survey launched d7. Kind of good. >> Well, we did send it out to our list. So thank you. >> Yeah. >> Okay. Good to hear. Then my other question kind of goes to something you said about intersection with this plan and the comprehensive plan. You know, tomorrow we're going to authorize funding, assume we're going to authorize funding for imagine Austin, you know, this comprehensive planning process, which, as I've learned about it in our city charter, really contemplates a massively intersectional process, right? Some people think of it as just land use, but now it's resources. It's everything. And so if you could speak to a little bit about how reindeer river will intersect with Austin. >> Sure thing. I'm really excited about that resolution. I'm happy to say, actually, I serve as the co-champion or champion for two of our priority programs and imagine Austin. So watershed, you know,

[11:00:12 AM]

Austin. So watershed, you know, helps participate heavily in both the green infrastructure priority program as well as the sustainable water management program. And so even in the, you know, initial development of Austin, our staff and a lot of community stakeholders we work with were heavily involved to make sure that kind of goals and objectives from our original watershed master plan, things like the watershed protection ordinance, were baked into imagine Austin as key priorities and ways to implement sustainable water management and green infrastructure. So we are already signed up and will be participating heavily with those different community groups that are going to be reevaluating the policies we meet on a monthly basis with imagine Austin staff, if not more frequently, to make sure that that connection is there and we're able to update them on reindeer river and incorporate range river into their work. But also understand what what's going to be coming out of their process that we might want to embed into our implementation. >> Great. Good to hear. Thank you. >> I have to pick which mic here. I've got two questions

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here. I've got two questions for y'all. First, let me say thank you for the very thorough briefing. Thank you. Also, I think we worked together last year to come out to the neighborhood council. I appreciate I appreciate how thorough y'all have been in this process. Thanks. I am wondering, though, it looks like this is a four year process or thereabouts, and I would assuming even in four years, like some things might have changed this year, like with the storm that maybe weren't reflected or just have simply changed since you started. It does seem like a long window of time. When I think of the wildfire plan that we've approved with the contractor. You know, that's like going to be a 12 to 18 month. Is there? What do you what what is the value of doing four years versus two years. Like at what point do you cut this off and say, we've been thorough and we've done our best to try and reflect community input and values. And here's our report that we're going to start using, because

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going to start using, because it feels like every year that we're not maybe using new information. My second question is about that. So I don't want to jump the gun here, but can you speak to that? Can you speak to the window of time it's going to take to to prepare everything and get this out there next year? >> Yeah. So I mean, I think ideally when we were first laying this out, it was going to be more of a two year process from launching engagement to adopting the plan, navigating rfp and procurement in the middle of that. Was challenging. And so we had to, you know, extend the length of the project. I think, you know, one of the unexpected positive, I don't want to call it positive because the impacts were devastating. But we heard a lot from that early window about drought and heat, because, you know, we were in the middle of really intense period of drought. And so we had a lot of concern about we haven't

had a major flood event in a long time. Like people's memory is short. And so we're very intentional about trying to go out to dove springs and communities that still have that, you know, memory kind of

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that, you know, memory kind of front and center. But seeing things like the microburst and the July 4th event coming through in the phase two of community engagement is really, I feel like made our staff feel more confident that we've heard from kind of the full spectrum of community from like the drought of record all the way up to one of the most historically devastating floods in state history. So there's kind of a wide range there. But yeah, to your point, you know, we were in different phases. And so trying to make sure I think the community activation group has helped serve as kind of that reality check for us. If you know, what we're serving up to them is what we learned through that initial phase is still kind of tracking with their what they're learning through their networks, with their lived experience. We had kind of some deep dives around the microburst on July 4th with them to talk about how their communities were impacted, what they were seeing, how that might change the trajectory of the plan. I think as we analyze the phase two data, we definitely want to have that inflection point of July 4th and see if we saw kind of different responses from people. We've got a lot of ways that we

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We've got a lot of ways that we can break down the data in terms. And so we haven't yet, but we can for d7 look at like who was directly impacted by flooding and what were their responses versus other folks? >> Okay. Go ahead. >> Another thing I'll add to that is that we we knew at the beginning, even before we knew it was going to be quite as long a process as it ended up being. We knew that it was going to be a few years and and that there would be that concern from the community. Like, you know, you guys are planning and planning and planning, what are we going to see a result? So we set an intention at the beginning to try to take action on actionable input sooner than waiting for plan adoption. So we've we've been able to do that in a couple of different instances. One example is that one of our community ambassadors gave us the input that we should really have mental health resources on our flood safety web page. So we've added some of those. Another example is queer Topia, one of the partner organizations that we worked with that focuses on the unhoused population, made the recommendation that we should ask Austin public

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should ask Austin public library if they could have vital document storage similar to what's at one Texas center and the the community court. And we were able to bring that recommendation to Austin public library. And they actually are they're piloting that at the branch right now. So we have been able to have

some earlier impact. There are other things too, but those are the kind of big examples that come to mind of making sure that we're not just sitting on that input for for years and years. >> Got it. Okay. Thanks for clarifying that. The second piece is and it's the struggle I have with a lot of the the sort of strategic plans that we've produced or are producing is helping me understand the circumstances. When you think they'd be most valuable to use. And I just as an example, I know that the imagine Austin folks have been meeting with council about their update also, and I kind of half joked, maybe mostly joked. We'll see with building services can can do this. But you know, kind of joked like, oh it would be

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joked like, oh it would be great on the dais every time we say, oh, well, what is the imagined Austin plan say about this? And like, confetti comes down and there's this celebration that we, you know, actually use the strategic plan. What do y'all what sort of circumstance do you see us taking advantage of this plan or other commissions or what? Like it sounds like you've already used it internally yourself as you've come to some conclusions through the community engagement process. But how do you see other folks using the plan? >> So I can say, you know, the current plan, even though like I said, you know, it's it's pretty old. It has some major gaps. It was a huge undertaking, like a lot of data, a lot of recommendations and a lot of work that the department has done over the last two decades has come from that plan. When we look at our five year planning for capital improvement projects, you know, the bond list that's coming through now, those are prioritized using the methodology in that plan. Things like the watershed protection ordinance, things like our drainage infrastructure, gis, our asset management program, those all came from recommendations in

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came from recommendations in the plan. So I think, you know, to some extent you'll you'll see it kind of indirectly through our budget, through our bond development, through, you know, new regulatory initiatives that we might bring forward. But yeah, I think, you know, while there were some specific recommendations on that plan that we work through, like I mentioned, it wasn't time bound. And so I think an exciting thing about this one is, you know, talking to the community and saying, like, we've done all this work, you know, watershed protection, you know, is a more mature department now, but what are really those big gaps that the community still sees of? Just like we're not hitting the Marc on this and having that community activation group dig in and say, like, we really want to see progress on these six key priorities. So that's what we're working through now. But I think that will give us a better way to report back to policymakers and say, like, these are the community commitments we made in the plan. And, you know, every budget cycle, everything we bring

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cycle, everything we bring forward, we can talk about how we're moving those objectives forward. >> Okay. Thanks for clarifying that. And I would just ask y'all to think as we go forward and you get to 2026 and present the final version of this, how you think we can best utilize the work that you've invested in here. Thanks. >> All right. Well, appreciate it very much. Can't wait to see y'all back. We would love to have you back when we have the plan in place and can see what all this work has led to and and culminated with. So thank you all very much for your time here today. And we do have. A brief or a memo that if anyone has any questions about, it's related to our on demand pickup. I have just one question. My question is has there been any thought and I don't know, to

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thought and I don't know, to the degree we can share this information or not. But you know, I know the the biggest concern I heard when we moved to this was, you know, on the on the bulk collection days, you would often see people with their pickup truck or their trailer who kind of beat the, the collection schedule and, and would reuse, you know, these materials in one form or fashion. And I'd hate to see, you know, disposing of these materials and recycling them is really good. But if we can use reuse them within our local economy, that seems to be even better because it's diverting it from our landfill. So was there ever any thought or consideration of saying, you know, on Monday, the first, these ten addresses have signed up, and if you want to beat us to the punch, it's on the curb. Feel free to go grab it. First. Was that ever contemplated?

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Was that ever contemplated? >> Good morning. Council members Amy Slagle, assistant director, Austin resource recovery. So no, when we when we formed the program, it was we were definitely looking at resources and how we could divert more material from the curb with our appliances, electronics items. So in terms of giving out specific addresses, we we didn't necessarily look at the contemplation of that specifically. I will say that we are actively working towards our furniture reuse warehouse that we got the EPA grant for. We're actively looking for properties, and that will be one way to divert additional materials. So, you know, overall, we've been pleased with how the program started these first six, seven months that it's been in place. We are we do have a couple of points that we're working out. We're working out some maybe some additional excuse me, education information for folks around, proper set outs, as well as some customer service points that we want to improve on. >> Very good. Well, just just curious about that. That's it from so councilmember.

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from so councilmember. >> Thank you chair. Thank you. Assistant director. Yeah, this is a challenge because we've gotten a lot of feedback. I'm surprised to the extent that actually people have been incredibly vocal. I always anticipated the move to to on demand being really plausible and sort of empowering people and not having them stuck to a fixed schedule. But we've heard a lot of feedback across the board that for different reasons, people appreciated the other way of doing things. And so I've got a couple of questions on this. One is it looks like savings are up, but collections themselves are down. Although it looks like we only had a year in the memo or the data that we were shared with to compare against, I'm wondering if it's possible to get go back a couple of years and try and understand kind of what the trajectory looks like, because I sort of interpreted different things in that memo. One is it looks like collections overall are up, but they were down against last year. Can you speak to any of

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year. Can you speak to any of that, or is it possible to help us get some additional years of data so we can kind of understand what the collection history here better looks like? >> Sure. We can certainly pull together more years. I can I will say that over the last several years, we've seen a downward trend in our bulk collection that's been since covid that we've seen those those numbers decrease. So but this was just a six month snapshot. So we'd certainly like to give it a full year and look at how it compared to a scheduled collection. So but overall tonnages have been decreasing. You know there may be some factors associated with that. It may be that people are waiting to use their collections to later in the year. It may even be a consumption situation where people are not in a place right now to be able to to get a new couch, a new mattress or new fencing. So that may also be contributing to the decline in numbers. >> And I'll share with you one of the some of the feedback we've gotten is for people that were just accustomed to the the prior way of doing things, the fixed date collections, and they often had a whole system of knowing that these were

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of knowing that these were coming. They would sort of plan to clean out their home or garage or whatever it is. And now they're sort of a implicit complaint that there's not that incentive to go do that. And that's what's stopping them from and therefore that's decreasing your collections also, as well as probably creating clutter in their homes, which is not exactly our responsibility. But setting that aside, I've just heard a number of folks say, you know, I kind of wish that maybe there'd be a hybrid system, for instance, like you would go back to doing one fixed collection and then having the rest be on demand or something like that. Is there any I know we want to get another six months of data, but is there any consideration for that kind of approach, depending on whether that might be an opportunity to increase collections, knowing that some people might be more comfortable with that approach? >> Yeah, we're again, only six months into this in this program. So and I think what we we are still seeing are folks are still working within their own communities to, to divert that material. So and we know that we encourage people to

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that we encourage people to divert material ahead of time. We want people to donate it or give it to their neighbor before, before it gets to us. So, you know, in terms of a hybrid collection, that's something we'd have to check into further. But again, we're starting to see these savings based on our current model. And it's something that we're seeing other cities that we followed other cities in as well. Miami-dade is another example of a city that's moved to on demand as well as city of Phoenix. In fact, the city of Houston reached out to us last couple of weeks with their new director to ask how we started our on demand model as a way to implement for their city and to address their bulk bulk situations. >> Okay. Thank you. And so is there a way to quantify anyway how much the other community are are working to divert? That is not then in your numbers. That would be, I guess represented somewhere else. But as part of the advantage of switching to this model. >> I'm sorry. Could you. >> Restate sorry, let me try and say that you mentioned that you're working with communities to divert instead, and I would

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to divert instead, and I would assume that that's not reflected then in the numbers that you've shared with us for pickups. Is that correct? >> That's correct. We just encourage it's part of our messaging. We encourage encourage diversion before before any of our programs. We want people to to compost. We want them to recycle everything before it ends up in a garbage situation. So we want that in our in our communities, as well as to pass that couch off to to a marketplace activity. That way it could be reused within the community. So it's not captured here. >> Got it. So yeah, I'm just trying to figure out is there is it impossible to measure then the extent that people are instead addressing this problem before. And that's why your collections look like they're down. But in reality people are solving their trash disposal issues in other ways. >> I think they'd be challenging to quantify. >> Okay. Then I guess I'll follow up with you to see if I can get some additional data to understand what it looks like. You know, during covid, post covid, maybe even before, if

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covid, maybe even before, if that's possible. I'm just again, the central challenge I have is from hearing from a lot of constituents that they they would take sort of proactive measures when they know that schedules were coming up for pickups. And I'm also wondering to the extent that part of this is a communication issue about this transition, about. Requiring more activity from people as opposed to the reliance on a service that comes twice a year or whatever it was. So it sounds like the best course is to to see how we get data for the next six months and then figure out whether and maybe look at some

additional historicals and then figure out whether this is overall, even though pickups are down and knowing that we can't measure the other folks that are diverting that this is working, as opposed to, again, exploring a hybrid system or something like that. >> Yeah. And I will say that we are going to we do have plans for additional education here

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for additional education here later this year. Actually, we just started talking about in the last couple of weeks, knowing that kind of fall cleaning time and that people are we want people to use their remaining collections for the year. So we're we're working towards that right now. >> Is that going to be a determining factor when if, say, we discover that a lot of folks that we may have some data indicated use the pickup service and they're not using it anymore because they're not being proactive with calling in pickups. And that that would help guide us after the year long trial about what the next best step is to try and make sure that we are covering our bases for people that have different needs or behaviors. >> Yeah, we can certainly include participation information. So okay, kind of just how many people use the the number of appointments they're allowed per year. You know customers are get up to three bulk brush and hazardous waste collections per year. So that's nine total collections that they have for the for the course of the year. >> Got it. Okay. Well I appreciate that. And we'll follow up to see if we can get

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follow up to see if we can get work with y'all to get some additional information. Sure thing. Thank you. >> I'm going to follow up with just one when we're measuring this after a year, is success more pickups than before or less pickups than before? Because you seem like success would mean like the ultimate goal is less in the landfill, right? That's what we're all trying to accomplish here. We this issue comes up in other areas completely divorced from this. But how are we measuring success is that if more people are having their trash collected or less? >> I think it's kind of a hybrid, is that we look at the resource savings internally, but also how many more items we're able to capture from the curb. So and I think that, you know, for the furniture reuse warehouse, that's our next. And then mattresses like the director mentioned, those are our next things that we want to try to help divert from the waste stream and continue to, to eat away at those tonnages, going to the landfill. >> Okay. All right. Well, thank

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>> Okay. All right. Well, thank you very much. Appreciate the update. And we'll see you in six months. >> Thank you. >> Well, with that, if there is nothing else, we will adjourn our committee today at 1119. Thank you all very much.