

MSWAC

Metropolitan Solid Waste Advisory Committee

King Street Center ▪ 201 South Jackson Street, Suite 5701 ▪ Seattle, WA 98104-3855

May 20, 2024

To: King County Executive Dow Constantine
King County Councilmember Rod Dembowski
King County Councilmember Girmay Zahilay
King County Councilmember Sarah Perry
King County Councilmember Jorge L Barón
King County Councilmember Dave Upthegrove
King County Councilmember Claudia Balducci
King County Councilmember Pete Von Reichbauer
King County Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda
King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn

CC: John Taylor, DNRP Director
Pat D. McLaughlin, Solid Waste Division Director

RE: ADVISORY NOTE IN SUPPORT OF THE 2025 SOLID WASTE RATE PROPOSAL

The Metropolitan Solid Waste Advisory Committee (MSWAC) recognizes the need for an adequate revenue stream to support the regional solid waste system and ensure continued progress on key capital projects such as transfer station modernization, maximizing disposal capacity at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill, diverting resources from disposal, and expanding recycling services. Toward this objective, King County's Solid Waste Division (SWD) has proposed a rate increase that would raise the current per-ton disposal rate by 10%, or the equivalent of an additional \$0.93 on the average monthly bill for curbside customers. SWD also proposes increasing the fee on landfilled construction and demolition (C&D) waste to \$13.00 per ton, up from \$4.25 (unchanged since 1993).

While fiscal accountability and responsible stewardship of public funds is a priority, we are mindful of how significant inflation and high interest rates are impacting our residents. Over the last few years, we have worked with the division to develop and implement the new fixed annual charge rate structure to mitigate revenue losses in case of drops in tonnage. SWD staff has also consulted with us on proposed ways to reduce and smooth the proposed rate path including delaying construction of maintenance facilities at the landfill, adjusting other capital spending estimates, and spending less in the current biennium to reduce spikes in the rate. The proposed 2025 rate increase will fund key initiatives and will position the division to maintain a smooth and steady rate path in future years.

Increasing the C&D fee will enable SWD to increase diversion from the landfill, support Re+ circular economy goals, and promote equity in frontline communities through new programs that:

- Fund consulting work to advise King County on methods to increase C&D separation and enforce code compliance.
- Initiate an ongoing program to train (and provide refresher training) building assessors in salvage and deconstruction best practices.
- Develop and run a program to train people in front-line communities to deconstruct and harvest materials from local homes slated for demolition, then use those materials to help other local low-income residents to renovate their homes at a lower cost.
- Digitize/automate reporting system at C&D scale houses.
- Assist the establishment of new C&D related WMBE businesses.

MSWAC is committed to programs and services that protect the environment and enhance the quality of life in our communities. Ensuring our residents continue to have access to the full range of essential waste disposal and recycling services King County provides is among our top priorities. We are also invested in the division's long-range comprehensive planning goals to boost recycling rates, modernize the Northeast and South County Recycling and Transfer Stations (with expanded services), and advance actions to mitigate climate change and address environmental inequities.

The Division's 2025 proposal will fund our key priorities including:

- Decrease the tonnage of materials being landfilled by adopting waste prevention and resource recovery programs, such as Re+, that are beneficial to the environment and local economy.
- Provide access to recycling and waste disposal services seven days a week at eight transfer stations and six days a week at two rural drop boxes.
- Implement capital improvements that generate family-wage jobs in the construction trades and expand access to recycling in communities, such as south King County, that currently have limited access to such services.

This proposal was discussed in the January, February, March, April, and May MSWAC meetings this year and we appreciate the dialogue with County staff. We favor this gradual and incremental approach to the primary rate increases and are supportive of the division's efforts to do more in the construction and demolition space.

We thank the Executive and County Council for considering our input as an advisory committee.

Signed on behalf of MSWAC,

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Penny Sweet

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Penny Sweet
Chair, Metropolitan Solid Waste Advisory Committee
Councilmember, City of Kirkland

DocuSigned by:

Linda Knight

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Linda Knight
Vice-Chair, Metropolitan Solid Waste Advisory Committee
Public Works Sustainability and Solid Waste Manager, City of Renton