## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Item:** | 5 | **Name:** | Terra Rose |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2018-0376 | **Date:** | September 19, 2018 |

**SUBJECT**

Proposed Motion 2018-0376 would acknowledge receipt of the 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan in response to a budget proviso requirement. Policymaker deliberations on the specific policies and strategies contained in the Plan are occurring through a separate ordinance (Proposed Ordinance 2018-0375) that would adopt the Plan.

**SUMMARY**

The Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (CSWMP) is a policy guidance document that sets the strategies for managing solid waste in King County for the next six-year planning period, with consideration of the next 20 years. In the 2017-2018 biennial budget ordinance,[[1]](#footnote-1) the Council included a proviso withholding $1,000,000 until the Executive transmits an updated CSWMP by July 26, 2018. The proviso further requires that the transmitted Plan include an analysis of various strategies for disposal of the region’s waste and also addresses current waste transfer needs in Northeast King County.

The transmitted Plan provides information on the respective costs, benefits, and challenges of three possible options for disposal: expanding the Cedar Hills landfill, exporting waste to an out-of-county landfill, and directing the County’s waste to a waste to energy facility that would be constructed in King County. For transfer capacity needs in Northeast King County, the CSWMP describes the options of leaving the existing Houghton Transfer Station in Kirkland open as-is, constructing a new Northeast Transfer and Recycling Station, or using a combination of facilities to meet service needs in that area.

Policymaker deliberations on the specific policies and strategies contained in the CSWMP, including those related to disposal and transfer capacity, are occurring through separate legislation that would adopt the 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan.[[2]](#footnote-2) The proposed motion that is the subject of this staff report would only acknowledge receipt of the Plan in response to a budget proviso.

**BACKGROUND**

The Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (referred to in this staff report as the CSWMP or transmitted Plan) is a policy guidance document that sets the strategies for managing solid waste in King County for the next six-year planning period, with consideration of the next 20 years. Both King County Code[[3]](#footnote-3) and state law[[4]](#footnote-4) require the County to develop and periodically update a CSWMP in cooperation with the cities that have signed interlocal agreements for solid waste services.

King County’s existing CSWMP was adopted in 2001.[[5]](#footnote-5) In 2006, the Solid Waste Division (SWD) began an effort to update the 2001 Plan that culminated in the Draft 2013 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan. However, the Council requested that SWD undertake a more rigorous review of the transfer system prior to finalizing the CSWMP following a decline in projected system tonnage after the recession, as well as the possibility at the time that five cities may leave the system in 2028 at the end of their interlocal agreements. The Executive responded to this request by transmitting the Transfer Plan Review Part 1 Report[[6]](#footnote-6) in 2014 and the Transfer Plan Review Part 2 Report[[7]](#footnote-7) in 2015.

**Proviso Requirement.** The Council included a proviso in the 2017-2018 biennial budget ordinance[[8]](#footnote-8) withholding $1,000,000 until the Executive transmits an updated CSWMP by March 31, 2018 that includes a range of strategies to address the region’s waste, including alternatives to landfilling, and an analysis of their costs and benefits. Subsequent supplemental budget ordinances amended the proviso to also require that the CSWMP address current waste transfer capacity needs in Northeast King County[[9]](#footnote-9) and to change the transmittal date to July 26, 2018.[[10]](#footnote-10) The proviso states:

*P1 PROVIDED THAT:*

*Of this appropriation, $1,000,000 shall not be expended or encumbered until the executive transmits the Solid Waste Comprehensive Plan, and a motion that should acknowledge receipt of the plan and reference the subject matter, the proviso's ordinance, ordinance section and proviso number in both the title and body of the motion and a motion acknowledging receipt of the plan is passed by the council.*

*A. In light of the current forecasted waste generation for the region and the diminishing capacity at the Cedar Hills landfill as it is currently configured, the plan shall include, but not be limited to, a range of strategies to address the disposal of the region's waste, including alternatives to landfilling, and an analysis of the costs and benefits of the respective strategies.*

*B. The plan must also address current waste transfer capacity needs in the Northeast area of King County and how those needs are proposed to be met.*

*The executive must file the plan and the motion required by this proviso by July 26, 2018, in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff and the lead staff for the transportation, economy and environment committee, or its successor. If the plan and motion are not transmitted by that date, appropriation authority for the $1,000,000 restricted by this proviso will lapse.*

**ANALYSIS**

The 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan and a motion that would acknowledge receipt of the Plan were transmitted on July 26, 2018. As noted above, the budget proviso specifically requested the CSWMP to evaluate a range of disposal strategies, including costs and benefits of the respective options, as well as describe how waste transfer capacity needs in Northeast King County are proposed to be met. A summary of how these topics are addressed in the CSWMP is provided below.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Disposal Strategies.** The 2019 CSWMP identifies three possible options for disposal of the County’s solid waste, ultimately recommending steps to expand the capacity and lifespan of Cedar Hills. The Cedar Hills landfill is currently projected to reach capacity in 2028 without further development.[[12]](#footnote-12) The transmitted Plan outlines increasing landfill capacity and density through diversion efforts such as recycling, continuing operational efficiencies, and through new area development within the existing landfill footprint and by raising the permitted height. According to the CSWMP, this option is recommended because it has the lowest rate impact of the considered alternatives, the lowest greenhouse gas emissions, and the lowest risk due to the County’s experience in landfill operation.

The other disposal options considered in the Plan are described below:

* *Waste Export:* Under this option, the County’s solid waste would be exported by rail to an out-of-county landfill similar to the City of Seattle and Snohomish County. The CSWMP indicates that five out-of-county landfills have capacity beyond the year 2100, however it is unclear whether sufficient future rail capacity will be available in 2028 to accommodate the County’s waste according to a consultant report commissioned by the Solid Waste Division.[[13]](#footnote-13) The transmitted Plan indicates this option is not recommended because it has higher costs than further development of Cedar Hills, and requires modifying transfer stations to become “rail ready,” making operational changes, and some lead time for contracting for services.
* *Waste to Energy:* Under this option, the County’s solid waste would be directed to a waste to energy facility constructed in King County that would reduce the waste to ash 90 percent by volume and 75 percent by weight. Waste that can’t be processed, called bypass waste, and ash would be transported to an out-of-county landfill by rail. The transmitted Plan notes that some costs could be offset through the sale of generated electricity and recovered metals. The CSWMP indicates this option is not recommended because it has the highest costs and greenhouse gas emissions of the considered alternatives, and requires guaranteed amounts of consistent material for efficient operation. The transmitted Plan indicates that potential rail constraints could impact the export of the ash and bypass waste.

The CSWMP indicates that, should the County further develop Cedar Hills, the estimated disposal cost per ton in 2029 would be $41 per ton, compared to $55 per ton for waste export, and $136 per ton for waste to energy (in 2029 dollars). Executive staff note that these figures are not additive to the per-ton solid waste disposal fee, but instead represent the disposal cost *portion* of the fee.

**NE King County Transfer Capacity Planning.** The 2019 CSWMP identifies three possible options for addressing waste transfer capacity needs in Northeast King County:

* *Keep the existing Houghton Transfer Station open:* According to the CSWMP, this option would keep the Houghton Transfer Station located in Kirkland open and largely in its current condition. The transmitted Plan notes that this would be the least expensive option, but would provide lower service levels compared to other urban parts of the County’s transfer network. Specifically, the CSWMP indicates that recycling would be limited, compaction would not be available, there would not be sufficient space to accommodate future tonnage, and host city concerns about the station’s location in a residential neighborhood would continue.
* *Use a combination of facilities to meet transfer capacity needs:* Under this option, a combination of facilities would be used to meet transfer capacity needs in Northeast King County. The CSWMP noted, for example, that one possible approach could be to leave the existing Houghton Transfer Station open to only self-haul customers, and to site and build a separate facility elsewhere in the service area to serve commercial haulers. The Plan indicates that this option would meet more service level criteria than the option described above, but would also continue some of the challenges of leaving the Houghton facility as-is.
* *Build a new Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station.* This option would site and build a new transfer station in Northeast King County that would offer recycling services comparable to the other newer stations, compaction on-site to reduce truck traffic to Cedar Hills, and be designed to accommodate current and future tonnage.

The CSWMP indicates that the estimated cost per ton in 2029 (including both capital and operating costs) would be $2.39 per ton for the “Houghton as-is” option, $9.79 per ton for the combination approach, and $13.11 per ton for a new Northeast station. The transmitted Plan notes that only the new Northeast station option would meet all six key “level of service” criteria and therefore recommends proceeding despite the higher estimated cost per ton.[[14]](#footnote-14) The transmitted Plan also provides for the Houghton Transfer Station to close after the new station is complete.

**Policymaker Review of the CSWMP.** Policymaker deliberations on the specific policies and strategies contained in the CSWMP, including those related to disposal and transfer capacity, are occurring through separate legislation that would adopt the 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan.[[15]](#footnote-15) The proposed motion that is the subject of this staff report would only acknowledge receipt of the Plan in response to a budget proviso.

With the transmittal of the 2019CSWMP, the funds encumbered by the proviso can be released, if Motion 2018-0376 is approved by the Council.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Motion 2018-0376 (Attachment A not included in packet due to size)
2. Transmittal Letter

**INVITED**

1. Pat McLaughlin, Director, Solid Waste Division, Department of Natural Resources and Parks

1. Ordinance 18409, Section 107, Proviso P1 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Proposed Ordinance 2018-0375 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. K.C.C. 10.24.020 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. R.C.W. 70.95 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ordinance 14236 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Motion 14145 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Proposed Motion 2015-0246. The Transfer Plan Review Part 2 Report was transmitted to Council, but ultimately lapsed without action. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ordinance 18409, Section 107, Proviso P1 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ordinance 18577 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ordinance 18766 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. More information about the specific policies and actions recommended in the CSWMP can be found in the staff report to Proposed Ordinance 2018-0375 for the September 12th Regional Policy Committee meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Motion 15174, Attachment A, Cedar Hills Landfill Tonnage and Capacity Report [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Normandeau Associates, Waste-to-Energy (WTE) Options and Solid Waste Export Considerations [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Key level of service criteria: time on site, recycling services offered, vehicle capacity, average daily handling capacity (tons), space for three days’ storage, ability to compact waste [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Proposed Ordinance 2018-0375 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)