173-22

RUTHANNE FULLER
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February 14, 2022

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CITY CLERK
NEWTON, MA. 02459

Honorable City Council
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Councilors:

I respectfully submit a docket item to your Honorable Council requesting authorization to transfer the sum of $165,000 from Acct # 0110498-579000 Current Year Budget Reserve to Acct # 0160238-585270 Parks, Recreation & Culture Trash Receptacles.

This funding will be used for the purchase of open-style trash and recycling receptacles with active monitoring and reporting capability for 30 strategic strategic high-use areas in the City. Please see the attached memo from Parks, Recreation and Culture Commissioner Nicole Banks for further details.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Ruthanne Fuller

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

173-22

February 14, 2022

Parks, Recreation & Culture Department
246 Dudley Road, Newton, MA 02459
Office: (617) 796-1500
parks@newtonma.gov

NEWTON
Parks, Recreation & Culture

Dear Mayor Fuller,

I am writing to respectfully request that you docket with the Honorable City Council for consideration a request of $165,000 for the purchase of open-style trash and recycling receptacles with active monitoring and reporting capability for strategic high use areas in the city.

The Beautification Division of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department recently piloted a one-year program by placing monitoring-capable trash and recycling open-style receptacles in several parks and a village space. This pilot program has been reviewed by the Sustainable Materials Management Committee and the DPW Sustainable Materials Division. Altogether, we piloted six receptacles: three pairs of a trash and recycling container in three locations. The pilot study was conducted due to a number of issues the team experiences with the existing Big Belly receptacles including: the trash bins needing to be emptied by hand, reports of strong and noxious odors, malfunctioning hopper handles, trash sticks to the inside of the hoppers, graffiti on the side panels, and the issue of hoppers jamming. This last issue is significant and likely is the cause of phone calls the City and councilors receive whereby people believe the receptacle is full, when in fact the unit is usually empty, but the hopper is full of waste that is stuck.

The pilot project, using a more open-style container system, has proven that this style of container is better for the public and for the sanitation team because: 1. The trash bin can be lifted with the trash truck tipper; 2. There are no handles to touch or hoppers to jam; 3. There are no side panels to be vandalized; 4. They have a bonnet lid with a good size opening so larger items do not get jammed. Additionally, even if an item does somehow get stuck, there are other openings in the same container making it clear that the barrel is not full and is still usable.

The pilot demonstrated equal rates of recycling compliance compared to our existing Big Belly receptacles, reduction in waste in surrounding area, less graffiti, less odor, and easier handling given the size and shape of the liner containers. Though we trialed 35-gallon capacity receptacles, we learned that 45-gallon receptacles would allow for more waste to be collected and still allow for a person to handle the barrel tip operation without assistance from another person.

We have come to appreciate the importance of active monitoring as the Department is able to strategically map out routes each morning to service those bins that need emptying. Not only does this reduce unneeded trips to bins that are not yet filled, it ensures that we empty full bins so that people may properly dispose of their waste materials. We would like to install new waste and recycle containers at 30 locations during the first phase of deployment.

There is one additional topic that I would be remiss not to address: rodents. Throughout the entire pilot we have had zero staff reports of rodents, either within or around the containers. Rodents are an issue with the current Big Belly systems as they are very capable of getting into the receptacles; however, they unfortunately are not able to get out on their own. Staff on occasion have opened the side door to access the trash liner and encounter a scared and anxious rodent. This creates an unsafe and uncomfortable work environment.

Migration Plan

We plan to implement a 2-phase migration to this open-style receptacle system with monitoring and reporting capability. Phase 1 is what is currently docketed and includes the purchase of 76 barrels with rain bonnets and wireless relay sensors that detect when the barrel is full and notifies City officials so the barrel can be added to the collection route. Each location will feature trash and recycling containers side-by-side. These barrels will be deployed at parks and school grounds, playgrounds and in village centers. Phase 2 will see the remaining barrels being purchased and deployed.

Cost

The seventy-six waste/recycle container units will cost approximately $165,000, inclusive of freight. This price includes: 76 receptacles, plastic liners, and bonnet lids with the relay system that monitors barrel fullness and alerts the City when full. The new units will replace our existing Big Belly units, primarily the ones that perform compaction as these systems are most difficult for our staff to work with (due to the weight of trash), have more frequent maintenance issues, and are more expensive to lease. On this last point, it is important to emphasize that, unlike the Big Belly systems that are leased, the plan to purchase new waste containers will result in the City having full ownership. After initial purchase, the City must only pay for over-the-counter trash bags (Big Belly units have proprietary bags) and the monitoring cost for each barrel that we want monitored. The industry average is approximately $5 per barrel for this monitoring service, meaning the cost to monitor all phase 1 containers would be around $7,500.00 annually. The City will have the flexibility to activate and deactivate monitoring services which will allow for testing whether a sensor is necessary for each barrel or only for a single barrel in a given multi-barrel deployment.

Schedule

The trash receptacle RFP must be done prior to a purchase being made; we anticipate a roughly 4-month turnaround time to receive delivery once the firm is selected.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Nicole Banks
Commissioner of Parks, Recreation & Culture

CC: Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer; Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer; Jim McGonagle, Commissioner of Public Works; Waneta Trabert, Director of Sustainable Materials Management

An image of the receptacle with rain bonnet that was piloted (photo not taken in Newton).