

ITEM #:	34
DATE:	03-10-26
DEPT:	PW

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: RESIDENTIAL CURBSIDE RECYCLING PROGRAM

BACKGROUND:

At the City Council meeting on February 24, 2026, the City Council received a report regarding the collection contract for the new Residential Curbside Recycling Program. In order to provide more time for the community to understand the program details, staff was directed to delay the award of contract to the March 10, 2026, agenda. (The original Council Action Form is attached.)

The action being requested of the City Council is to approve the five-year contract with Aspen Waste Systems of Iowa for a residential curbside recycling service and approve changes to Appendix F of the Ames *Municipal Code*.

Two issues raised from the public input include: 1) a desire to opt out of the residential curbside recycling program that will be offered, and 2) the size of the recycling cart.

ISSUE 1 - Everyone Pays the Fee

As indicated previously, the proposed contract for curbside recycling requires that Aspen receive a collection fee from all eligible customers, not just those who choose to participate in the service. This requirement is consistent with other communities who provide this service. **To do otherwise would make it extremely challenging for the contractor to estimate the number of customers who would opt out, and that risk would translate to higher prices for the customers who choose to participate.** In addition, national studies have shown that voluntary participation in recycling programs do not produce the diversion rates required by the IDNR. **The existence of required fees and access to a more convenient curbside service should result in higher participation and diversion rates.**

ISSUE 2 - Size of the Recycling Cart

Additionally, as directed by the City Council on November 18, 2025, the collection contract specifies uniform procurement of 96-gallon carts. That report indicated that a standard 65-gallon cart is 27" wide x 27" deep and 41" high, while a typical 96-gallon cart is 29" wide x 33" deep and 45" high. **As noted at that time, the use of a standard cart size removes the administrative and operational burden of providing multiple cart size options (and the resultant increased costs).** As staff noted at that time, once the program is up and running staff can evaluate ways to accommodate requests for different cart sizes.

CHANGES TO APPENDIX F OF THE *MUNICIPAL CODE*:

In addition to the award of contract, the City Council must also amend Appendix F of *Municipal Code* to incorporate the fees that will be charged for the service. The Legal Department has prepared a resolution in order to accomplish this, which is attached. The resolution reflects the

following:

1. The customer charge for curbside recycling collection is \$7.75 per month. This amount has been calculated based on the City's cost to operate the entire program, which is detailed further in the original February 24 report.
2. A customer utilizing two or more 96-gallon carts for recycling service will be charged \$5.00 per month for each additional cart. This amount has been calculated by staff in a manner similar to the base amount of \$7.75, and reflects the costs for the cart and the facility and disposal costs related to the additional material collected in the additional cart.
3. The late set-out return fee has been established at \$15. This fee is a direct pass-through from the contract hauler, since a return trip to collect a cart that was set out late results in a cost to the hauling contractor, but not the City.
4. If a customer damages or destroys a cart, the cost for an additional cart will be billed to the customer at the actual replacement cost.

The modifications to Appendix F will take effect on July 1, 2026, the implementation date of the program. If fee adjustments are necessary in the future, revisions will be brought to the City Council as a part of the annual rate and fee update process.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the following:
 - a. Award a 5-year contract to Aspen Waste Systems of Iowa, Inc., of Ames, Iowa, for Residential Curbside Recycling Collection services beginning July 1, 2026.
 - b. Approve the attached fee resolution amending Appendix F of *Municipal Code*.
2. Award a 5-year contract to one of the other two finalists.
3. Direct staff to modify the fee resolution amending Appendix F.
4. Refer this item back to staff for further information.

The Council should be aware that delaying the award of this contract could jeopardize the ability to initiate the new service on July 1. Further delays also will have a substantial financial and operational impact on the Electric utility.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The RFP process for residential curbside recycling collection yielded several competitive proposals. After evaluation and interviews, staff believes that a contract with Aspen Waste Systems would represent the best value and service for the community's needs. Aspen's customer service approach, use of technology, unique offerings for the other communities in the Resource Recovery System, and pricing all meet or exceed the City's desired service level. The award of the contract will also coincide with the public education and outreach

activities planned in advance of the program beginning on July 1, 2026.

In addition, staff has prepared a resolution incorporating the necessary fees to implement the curbside recycling program. The adoption of this resolution will be necessary in order to authorize charging customers through the utility billing process.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative #1a-b, as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Trash and Recycling Fees in Iowa.pdf](#)

[February 24 Report on Curbside Recycling Program.pdf](#)

[Appendix F 2026.PDF](#)