

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: February 18, 2026

To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Kristina Owens, Government Operations Manager
Subject: Solid Waste Management Competitive Bidding Request for Proposal

Recommendation to Council:

1. Receive a presentation and provide comments on the Town's solid waste competitive bidding process for a new exclusive franchise agreement through a Request for Proposals.
2. By motion, approve the Request for Proposal for a franchise agreement for exclusive solid waste services, including collection of garbage, recyclable materials, and organic waste from residential, multi-family, commercial, and government entities in the Town, and authorize staff to publish the Request for Proposal following incorporation of Town Council's final comments.

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports the goals of Fiscal Health, Infrastructure and Livability. Goal Statement: Ensure the economic health and long-term financial viability of the Town. Goal Statement: Through a lens of sustainability and innovation, invest in the Town's infrastructure and public facilities to meet the needs of future generations. Goal Statement: Preserve community character by maximizing the use of existing amenities and creating future opportunities that enhance quality of life for all.

Background:

On November 4, 1996, a voter initiative was approved requiring solid waste services to be competitively bid every ten years. This initiative, referred to as the “Refuse, Recycling, and Composting Competitive Bid Ordinance,” requires that “all Town recycling, solid waste and green waste collection programs, whether provided through an exclusive or non-exclusive agreement, shall be subject to a competitive bid process.”

On August 2, 2017, after the completion of the Town of Windsor’s (“Town’s”) third consecutive competitive bidding process, the Town contracted with Sonoma County Resource Recovery (“SCRR”) for exclusive collection of residential and commercial solid waste. By Town Code, the Town is required to issue a Request for Proposal (“RFP”) for a competitive formal bid process in which the Town solicits proposals from potential vendors. A new agreement must be in place by October 1, 2027, as the existing agreement with SCRR will expire on September 30, 2027, and cannot be extended beyond this date.

Process Participants

On August 6, 2025, in preparation for the SCRR agreement expiration, the Town Council approved a contract with R3 Consulting Group, Inc. (“R3”) to assist the Town in developing an RFP and drafting a new solid waste Franchise Agreement (“FA”). At this same meeting, Town Council formed a Council Ad Hoc Committee (“Ad Hoc”), appointing Vice Mayor Potter and Councilmember Leep. The Ad Hoc was directed to work with R3 and staff to set initial programming and service parameters and to clearly outline how potential proposals, as well as the costs associated with these proposals, will be submitted. In order to promote community participation, the Town Manager analyzed whether a Community

Committee could be beneficial in providing feedback and comments on the development and drafting of a new exclusive FA.

After careful consideration, on September 25, 2025, the Town Manager established and appointed a five-member Solid Waste Community Committee (“Committee”) from among the eight parties who had expressed interest. The Town Manager established the Committee using a whole community approach, and with consideration of the service sectors that are served by the terms of an FA. The community members appointed were: Betsy Mallace for the resident-at-large representative; Karen Alves for the multi-family sector representative; Scott Gross, General Manager of Oliver’s Market, for the commercial/business sector representative; Rich Carnation, School Board Trustee, for the Windsor Unified School District representative; and James Johnson, WeACT, for the community-based organization focused on sustainability representative. Furthermore, the Town Manager formed a Town Evaluation Panel (“Panel”) consisting of five Town staff members with experience in contract administration, risk management, sustainability, and administration. The Panel consists of Nick Walker, Administrative Services Director; Lauren Berges, Senior Management Analyst; Chloe Ballard, Sustainability Coordinator; Kristina Owens, Government Operations Manager; and Jon Davis, Town Manager.

The Ad Hoc worked with the Committee and the Panel (“RFP Team”) and collectively attended bi-weekly meetings and two public community meetings. The Ad Hoc and RFP Team worked collaboratively to review community feedback and survey results (which consisted of 312 survey submittals), establish a prioritization of community feedback, agree on a list of desired solid waste programs, draft the RFP guiding principles, and propose the evaluation criteria and scoring matrix to be used on submitted proposals.

Public Meetings and Community Survey

As mentioned, the Town held two Solid Waste Public Meetings in October, with approximately 7-9 community members in attendance at the first meeting and approximately 12-15 community members in attendance at the second meeting. Also in attendance at both meetings were representatives from two existing haulers that provide services in Sonoma County, SCRR and Recology Sonoma Marin. The first objective of the public meetings was to inform residents and the business community about the procurement process, the history behind the competitive bidding and selection process, the fundamental outline of what solid waste collection service entails, and the potential array of programs and services that might be provided as part of a new agreement. The second objective of the public meetings was to gather feedback. The public meetings were interactive, asking participants to share their opinions regarding their program priorities and provide feedback on which existing programs they found to be most beneficial and/or less useful. During the public meetings and in the resulting written and spoken comments, attendees expressed strong concerns about costs and expressed a desire for more transparency in both how rates are set and how much various programs are used.

Recognizing that not all community members could attend the public meetings, the Town released a survey on social media platforms and through WaterSmart, seeking the same feedback, preferences, and priorities regarding solid waste programs. This survey resulted in a total of 312 response submittals. The survey was a useful instrument to gain community feedback regarding solid waste programs and services; however, it should be noted that the survey was not a scientific survey and thus could not yield statistically valid results.

Survey respondents were asked to rank their prioritization of five common goals for solid waste services:

- Cost

- Reliability of Service
- Sustainability
- Customer Service
- Extra Programs and Services

As shown in Attachment - Exhibits, these and other survey results were used by the Ad Hoc and the RFP Team in compiling their list of desired solid waste programs, the RFP guiding principles, and the evaluation criteria and scoring matrix mentioned below.

- **Exhibit 1: Survey Respondent Priorities, Ranked**, “Cost” and “Reliability of Service” were the top priorities; 46% of respondents ranked Cost first, while 44% ranked Reliability of Service first, and 78% of respondents ranked each one either first or second. Survey respondents were also asked to share their levels of satisfaction with various programs and services currently in place.
- **Exhibit 2: Survey Respondent Satisfaction with Existing Programs**, shows responses regarding five popular programs. Respondents were generally happy with the current programs in place. One existing program—split-cart recycling—received inverse results in the survey.
- **Exhibit 3: Survey Respondent Satisfaction with Split-Cart Recycling**, 55% of respondents were somewhat or very dissatisfied with the split-cart recycling currently in place in Windsor.

Discussion:

Prioritizing Transparency and Acknowledging Cost-of-Service

California’s legal landscape and regulatory requirements regarding rate-setting have shifted in the last several years. Challenges to municipal rates under both Propositions 218 and 26 have become more common, resulting in closer attention and questioning of how rates are set.

This context, paired with Town residents’ high prioritization of cost-of-rates and transparency in rate-setting, led the Ad Hoc and the RFP Team to recommend that the Town’s RFP call for proposals that explicitly tie the rates from each individual service sector (e.g., single-family residential, multi-family residential, commercial, and government) to the cost-of-service for that service sector. This is an innovatively transparent approach to both proposals and rate-setting. It ensures that each service recipient pays only for the services they receive or are entitled to, without subsidizing customers in any other service sector.

Government Sector Rates

This new transparent approach has significant implications for how costs and rates will be allocated in the anticipated proposals. Under the existing FA and dating back through 30 years of agreements, three local government entities—the Town, Windsor Unified School District (“WUSD”), and Sonoma County Fire District (“SCFD”)—have received solid waste services without being directly charged for those services. This was a common arrangement in most California franchise agreements, and was traditionally considered reasonable in most communities, given that local government entities provide local benefits and the cost for their solid waste services would presumably be borne by local residents and businesses regardless of the payment mechanism.

Under the proposed transparent RFP process and affiliated rate-setting, however, the Ad Hoc and the RFP Team are both recommending that Town, WUSD, and SCFD service units pay directly for services under a new “Government” service sector with a corresponding rate sheet for Government entities.

WUSD and SCFD Participation in Franchise Agreement

To uphold the Ad Hoc and RFP Team's recommendation to transparently tie rates to cost-of-service and have government agencies pay directly for service, Town staff have continued to engage in discussions with both WUSD and SCFD about their participation in the exclusive FA (these discussions have been

underway for many years). Town staff have presented to the WUSD School Board (“Trustees”) and WUSD staff on multiple occasions, most recently in December 2025. At the December 2025 meeting, Town staff informed the Trustees of the community's desire for transparency and reduced costs, which has led the Town staff to propose eliminating any subsidization of WUSD rates under the proposed RFP. The final decision on whether to eliminate this subsidy rests with the Town Council.

It should be noted that WUSD is not mandated to participate in the Town’s FA; WUSD is governed by the State of California, and as such may elect to source and negotiate a separate agreement with any solid waste hauler instead of joining the Town’s FA. In separate conversations, Town staff have confirmed that SCFD will be staying with the Town’s exclusive FA, and SCFD has acknowledged that they are aware that under the new FA, they will be paying directly for solid waste services.

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Program Access for Multi-Family Residential Customers

Another area of feedback that came through in the survey results and community was a desire for multi-family residential customers to have similar access to special solid waste programs that have traditionally been offered to single-family residential customers. While multi-family customers have had access to some of these programs under the existing FA, the draft RFP requires that proposers include multi-family sector versions of more specialized programs.

Mixed Use Rates

The Town’s 2040 General Plan identifies mixed-use designations. Mixed-use development includes both residential and commercial units sharing common spaces and infrastructure. Under the existing FA, mixed-use development has been categorized in the commercial sector and has not been able to take advantage of some solid waste programs that are offered to residential customers.

The Ad Hoc and RFP Team are both recommending that the RFP include Mixed Use as a special category within the multi-family residential sector, and the draft RFP document makes it clear that Mixed Use customers will have the same access to solid waste programs as other multi-family customers.

Service Sectors Outlined in the RFP

To summarize, the RFP as drafted requires proposers to propose rates for the following service sectors:

- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential, which is divided into three sub-sectors:
 - MFD-C (multi-family service units within which residents share collective containers)
 - MFD-I (multi-family service units within which each dwelling unit has its own individual containers)
 - MXD (service units with a mix of commercial and residential uses that include at least five dwelling units)
- Commercial
- Government

This expansion and refinement of service sectors is expected to increase transparency and eliminate potential subsidies for any given sector.

Programs and Services

In addition to the standard weekly collection of garbage, recyclable materials, and organic waste that

forms the baseline service of a solid waste contract, the existing FA and the new FA include additional elective programs and services that provide benefits to residents and businesses. The Ad Hoc and RFP Team were given a list of potential programs and services to consider, as well as feedback on these programs and services from the survey and public meeting results. The Ad Hoc and RFP Team then provided recommendations on which programs to require as part of the RFP, and how to treat each program in the rates being proposed. Table 1 - Program and Service Options below lists programs or services and indicates whether each (a) is included as part of the baseline package of programs in the RFP (to be included as part of baseline rates), or (b) is to be included in proposals as an optional add-on service that the Town may choose to adopt during negotiations.

Table 1 - Program and Service Options

Item No.	Program or Service	Rate Structure Inclusion
1	Abandoned Waste Clean-Up (NEW)	Optional Add-On
2	Additional Organic Waste Cart Size (NEW)	Optional Add-On
3	Additional Recycling Cart Size (NEW)	Optional Add-On
4	Bill Payment System Requirements	Included in Baseline
5	Bulky Waste for SFD and MFD, 1 free pick-up per year	Included in Baseline
6	Bulky Waste for SFD and MFD, 2nd free pick-up per year	Optional Add-On
7	Cardboard Drop Off Locations	Optional Add-On
8	Cardboard Only Containers and Route	Included in Baseline
9	Container Replacement and Cleaning	Included in Baseline
10	CRV Redemption (NEW)	Not required; proposers are encouraged to include as an alternative
11	Dual-Stream Recycling	Disallowed
12	Single-Stream Recycling	Included in Baseline
13	Education and Outreach Programs	Included in Baseline
14	Supplemental Household Hazardous Waste Programs (NEW)	Not required; proposers are encouraged to include as an alternative
15	Government Sector Rates (NEW)	Included in Baseline
16	Mixed Use Sector and Rates (NEW)	Included in Baseline
17	Holiday Tree Drop Off	Optional Rate
18	Holiday Tree Pick-up, 1 week	Included in Baseline
19	Holiday Tree Pick-up, 2 week (NEW)	Optional Add-On
20	Indoor Kitchen Pails for All Customers Upon Request	Included in Baseline
21	On-Premises (Access to backyard/off-street) Service*	Included in Baseline*
22	Senior Discount	Not included in rates; proposers are asked to provide as part of goodwill
23	Street Sweeping	Included in Baseline

24	Town Enforcement Clean-Up (Emergency Services)	Requirement included in baseline, but Town will pay a rate per-service
25	Town Event Services	Optional Add-On
26	Town's Public Trash Cans	Optional Add-On
27	Used Batteries Pick-Up for SFD and MFD	Included in Baseline
28	Used Battery Drop-Off	Optional Add-On
29	Used Oil Pick-Up for SFD	Included in Baseline

*Under proposed conditions, on-premises service will continue to be offered to customers for an additional fee. Customers with physical limitations may qualify for free on-premises service.

Ongoing Use of Existing Carts

As part of the existing FA with SCRR, the Town has the option to take ownership of the carts that are currently in use by Town customers. This provides the Town with the option to request that proposers incorporate the use of these carts into their proposals, which will prevent unnecessary purchasing and thus reduce both costs and waste. The RFP is drafted to ask proposers to use the existing carts, if possible, while acknowledging that the split recycling carts may be harder to reuse than the garbage and organics carts.

Collection Vehicle Requirements

In another tactic to reduce costs and waste, it is the Ad Hoc and the RFP Team's recommendation not to require the purchase of new collection vehicles at the start of the contract, but just to require that no vehicle is more than ten (10) years old. Therefore, an incoming hauler will have the option to utilize truck resources within their fleet until the collection vehicle is ten (10) years old. The goal is to reduce waste by reusing assets that are functional and in good repair, and to meet zero-waste goals in the early stages of the FA.

No Limitation on Inter-Jurisdictional Routing

A final tactic to reduce costs is the allowance of solid waste collection routes operating in the Town to also collect solid waste from outside the Town's jurisdiction. Currently, there are restrictions in place that disallow SCRR from collecting waste from outside of the Town on routes that serve the Town (with some exceptions). Going forward, Town staff is recommending allowing an incoming hauler to collect waste from other jurisdictions on the same routes that provide service in the Town. This has the potential to increase collection efficiency and increase cost-effectiveness.

The RFP issuance and proposal evaluation process follows Council consideration of the final draft of the RFP, developed through the process described herein following recommendations by the Ad Hoc and RFP Team. Upon Town Council approval, the RFP will be issued on February 19, 2026, soliciting proposals for an exclusive FA. Those proposals that pass the initial "Pass/Fail" review will continue to be evaluated by the Staff Evaluation Panel and R3 on the following Evaluation Criteria, using a scoring matrix of 100 points total in Table 2 - Evaluation Criteria below.

Table 2 - Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points
Customer Rates	40

Cost of Service & Fiscal Transparency	20
Customer Service	20
Sustainability	10
Fiscal Ability & Integrity	10
Total	100

Following the review and evaluation of the proposals, the Staff Evaluation Panel and R3 will proceed with interviews, site visits, reference checks, and contract negotiations (if needed). Then, once contract negotiations have been completed, Staff and R3 will present the results to the Town Council for consideration and potential adoption by resolution to award the next FA. Solid Waste collection service provided via the new FA would commence on October 1, 2027. The RFP timeline is shown in Table 3 - Request for Proposal Timeline below.

Table 3 - Request for Proposal Timeline

Date	Activity
February 19, 2026	Issue RFP and Draft Franchise Agreement
February 25, 2026 (2PM - 4PM)	Pre-Proposal Conference & Submit Form A
March 13, 2026 (4PM)	Final Day to Submit Questions
March 23, 2026	Responses to Questions emailed to vendors that have requested the RFP documents
April 15, 2026 (4PM)	RFP Due Date
May 15, 2026	Initial Evaluations Completed
May 18 - 22, 2026	Interviews
May 22, 2026	Final Evaluations Completed
June 30, 2026	Contract Negotiations Completed (placeholder)
August 19, 2026	Anticipated Award Recommendations
October 1, 2027	Service Begins

Following Town Council approval of the RFP, staff will advertise and manage the RFP process in coordination with the Staff Evaluation Panel, the Town Attorney, and R3 within the proposed timeline and will bring the matter back to Council, as required, for further action.

Fiscal Impact:

The fiscal impact on the General Fund as a result of this action is uncertain at this time, until approved by the Town Council. The revenue received from the franchise fees based on fixed costs proposed in

the RFP will be determined after the awarding of the new franchise agreement.

Environmental Review:

The approval of the proposed RFP does not have a significant effect on the environment; such approval is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3).

Attachment(s):

1. Exhibits 1 to 3
2. Solid Waste Management Request for Proposals
3. Evaluation Criteria - Request for Proposals
4. Solid Waste Management New Franchise Agreement
5. Sonoma County Resource Recovery Collection Agreement 2017-2027
6. Sonoma County Resource Recovery Rate Sheets 2025-26
7. Sonoma County Resource Recovery Current Solid Waste Subscription Data
8. Master Operating Agreement - Central Landfill and Transfer Stations
9. Waste Delivery Agreement Republic Services and Town
10. Zero Waste Sonoma Joint Powers Agreement_Amended and Reinstated
11. Zero Waste Sonoma MOU regarding SB1383
- 13.1 Correspondence Received (Distributed 2026.02.18)
- 13.1 PowerPoint (Distributed 2026.02.18)

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