



Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee

October 19, 2021

Summary and Motions

Chair F. Brown called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Committee Members Kay, Ellinger, Moloney, McCurn, Sheehan, Kloiber, and Bledsoe were present. Committee Member Worley was absent. Council Members Plomin and Reynolds were also present as non-voting members.

I. Approval of August 24, 2021 Committee Summary

Motion by Kloiber to approve the August 24, 2021 Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee Summary. Seconded by Ellinger. The motion passed without dissent.

II. Annual Vacuum Leaf Collection Plan

Rob Allen, Director of Streets and Roads, provided a report on the leaf collection program which is performed with operational assistance from Division of Water Quality and Division of Parks & Recreation. They also used a private contractor, Republic Services to be deployed in Zone C which is 25% of the collection area. Allen explained that there are about 90,000 residents who receive city trash collection who also receive leaf collection and he provided guidelines for leaf collection. He pointed out that leaves should be raked into piles between the sidewalk and the curb, making sure the leaves are not raked into the street. He reviewed alternative ways to dispose of leaves which include utilizing the gray yard waste container and paper yard waste bags; mulching leaves; home composting; and disposing of leaves at the landfill. He mentioned that only a two-week notice is provided prior to leaf collection due to staffing and equipment availability. Leaf collection is divided into four zones and each quadrant is assigned one to two weeks of leaf collection. This service generally begins in early November, but this can be impacted by weather. We are authorized to hire 40 employees for this program, but this year we have only received 15 applications and only four of those have completed the application process. All information about the program including the interactive map can be found at www.lexingtonky.gov/leaves.

Bledsoe and Commissioner Albright discussed tracking the amount of times the gray carts are picked up to see if that has increased which is not something they do currently, but they can. Bledsoe said this would be helpful to determine how many people are using the leaf collection program versus the gray carts as the primary source of leaf disposal. Allen said this has increased cart use and he emphasized that the leaf collection service is provided only one time (unless there is an emergency) because it is not cost efficient to service a location a second time. Bledsoe said the communication plan looks great and she appreciates that there is not a specific date announced for collection as issues can arise that could cause a delay. She encouraged an increased effort to get more CDL drivers in the apprenticeship program because it is increasingly more important to be able to cross-utilize employees.

Moloney and Allen reviewed temporary pay and Allen confirmed that the hourly rate has been increased to \$11.50. Moloney expressed concern with many jobs in Lexington paying a higher wage which will make it difficult to find people who want to do this job for less pay. As an alternative to the leaf collection program this year, he suggested offering more bags to people as a solution and said he does not want to see employees having to do leaf collection when their main job is to keep the roads safe. He said by not having enough employees to execute the leaf collection program and pulling employees from road projects, it could present multiple problems.

Reynolds and Allen discussed the manpower spent on the program and the calculation for determining the amount of leaves diverted from the storm system through the leaf collection program. Discussing the communication plan, Allen mentioned the collaborative effort which utilizes multiple divisions including the Public Information Office. Reynolds asked if leaf collection has ever been outsourced or if it has always been in-house. Allen explained that Republic Services does 25% of the collection and we have partnered with them for about 5 years. He spoke about the cost for the partnership which was \$150,000 this year, a figure that has grown from \$120,000 in previous years. They do not have an overall cost for the program across divisions, but \$300,000 is budgeted for Streets and Roads and that does not include maintenance and other costs, but Allen said he will send the aggregate number to council members.

McCurn and Allen discussed that the best way for someone to get the yard waste coupons (for bags) is to contact LexCall. Allen said he does not believe there is a limit on the number of coupons, but there is a limit on the leaf program overall, adding that Waste Management spends about \$300,000 on yard waste bags. McCurn and Allen discussed how many bags overall are distributed every year, but Allen was unsure what the exact number is. McCurn asked how inclement weather would impact leaf collection and Allen explained that when weather clears, leaf collection resumes, but it could shift the collection schedule by 48 hours or so. McCurn asked if street sweepers hit nearby arterials following leaf collection or if this is a possibility and Allen said they could do it, but not in the context of leaf collection and the additional streets would take away from them finishing what is being done in residential areas.

Kay and Allen reviewed the process for yard waste collection and Allen explained that it is first taken to the yard waste transfer station and then it is hauled to the compost facility at Haley Pike and he emphasized that the yard waste from the gray carts is collected year-round. Kay asked if we hit the \$300,000 budget for bags every year and Allen said we come close and the bags are used often, but the intent is for them to be complimentary to using the gray cart which is the primary means for yard waste disposal. Kay asked how many households have the gray cart and Allen explained the amount is fewer than the number of residents who have city collection because yard waste and recycling are voluntary (Commissioner Albright will follow-up with that number). Kay expressed concern that people may not be aware that the gray cart is the primary means for leaf disposal and he encouraged getting this message out. Allen said they have increased education and outreach to specify that this is the primary means for leaf disposal. Kay asked how someone would request a gray cart and Allen said, as long as they have city trash collection, they can call LexCall to make this request.

No further comment or action was taken on this item.

III. Annual Snow Removal Plan

Rob Allen, Director of Streets and Roads, presented the annual snow plan report and began with an expense comparison for fiscal years 2018-2022. He reviewed the current salt supply which is 8,800 tons and the FY2022 budget includes \$700,000 for salt. He displayed a map to illustrate the route rankings from 1 (primary arteries) to 4 (local residential streets). The goals of the 2021-22 snow plan are to complete the roadway snow plan within 48 hours of snow end and to complete the sidewalk snow plan within 96 hours of snow end. Explaining the Sidewalk Snow Removal Plan, Allen said, it will be primarily executed by combining efforts from Environmental Services, Parks and Recreation, and Facilities servicing over 80 miles of sidewalks. He described the staffing effort saying that they utilize CDL drivers from Streets and Roads as well as Water Quality. He continued the presentation with a timeline for the plan finalization.

Bledsoe expressed concern with not knowing where the snow plows have been to determine if certain roads have been treated and she asked if that is a software issue or a truck issue to which Allen responded it is an expense issue and would increase the cost from \$30/month per truck to \$150. Allen suggested that people look up the traffic cameras for certain streets to see if they have been plowed or not. Bledsoe asked about using the rock again this year and Allen clarified that the rock is only used in emergency situations. Bledsoe asked if there is a back-up plan if we do not have a full staff to meet the expectations and Allen confirmed that the plan presented today reflects current staffing. Bledsoe said she feels this process has improved significantly since 2015.

Allen and LeGris confirmed that property owners are responsible for clearing sidewalks on private property within 24 hours after the end of the snowfall. LeGris asked about privately owned sidewalks included in the rank system such as those in front of schools and Allen confirmed those are all public facilities or LFUCG-owned so they would be treated by Environmental Services or Facilities. LeGris asked if there is anything additional that homeowners should do for ice and Allen confirmed ice and snow are considered as one and therefore ice needs to be removed as well. He suggested that homeowners utilize preventative techniques such pre-treating with brine or salt before it sticks to the pavement.

Moloney and Allen discussed the original salt barn on Old Frankfort Pike and Allen said this salt barn is structurally deficient and the capacity has been reduced from 3,000 tons to 1,800. There was a study done in 2019 to look at replacement of this barn and this is also being considered for an ARPA project. Moloney asked which private contractor is used for snow plowing and Allen explained that it was Red River Ranch and they are contracted with the state, but they do not have the capacity to help us.

Sheehan expressed appreciation for the transparency of the maps that show priority areas and the ranking of the streets where the snow plow is. She asked if there are recommendations for residents in lower ranked areas who might not be receiving services. Allen said special requests are handled on a case-by-case basis, but they can't add a street for service where it does not make sense. He said there are times when a high priority request for service comes through for a school or hospice and they will make an exception to get those areas treated, but as a result, another area may not be treated.

Plomin spoke about snow removal in front of a residence which should be cleared within 24 hours after the snow ends and she asked how Code Enforcement is involved in this process. Allen said it is complaint driven by calling LexCall to report.

No further comment or action was taken on this item.

IV. Items Referred to Committee

No action was taken on this item.

Motion by LeGris to adjourn at 2:15 p.m. Seconded by Kay. Motion passed without dissent.