



Environmental Quality & Public Works (EQPW) Committee

May 13, 2025

Summary and Motions

Chair Hannah LeGris called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Committee Members Dave Sevigny, James Brown, Tyler Morton, Emma Curtis, Liz Sheehan, Denise Gray, Joseph Hale, Amy Beasley, and Hil Boone were present. Vice Mayor Dan Wu was present as a non-voting member.

I. APPROVAL OF APRIL 22, 2025 COMMITTEE SUMMARY

Motion by Hale to approve the April 22, 2025 Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee Summary. Seconded by Gray. Motion passed without dissent.

II. WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT FEE INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM

Charlie Martin, Director of the Division of Water Quality, explained that in April 2009, a Task Force recommended a fee that became Code of Ordinances Article XIV. Additionally, the task force suggested creating an incentive grant program funded with \$1.2 million annually for education programs, water quality projects, and flood mitigation projects. Residential properties receive \$200,000 in incentive grants, while non-residential properties receive \$1 million. The ordinance for the Water Quality Management Fee requires a 10% allocation of the annual revenue to the program. Martin noted that grant cancellations occur due to cost issues, leadership changes, the grant being tied to an organization's property that has relocated, and a lack of experience in the construction industry.

When asked how District Council Members can be better partners in the community to communicate the availability of grants, Martin said his staff engages with the Council Aides to share information, and they communicate in advance of awarding grants. Information about this program is posted on the website, but the problem is getting people to look there. Martin explained two factors that contribute to an increase: an escalator tied to the fee and an expanded footprint resulting from the development. When someone submits a plan to build, Martin said they collect a fee for this, which is based on the impervious area. When asked what more we can do to encourage these improvements, Martin suggested that his team meet internally to discuss and report back; there are ideas for how to improve. Addressing only one application received for innovation and how we get more, Martin said we need to encourage the technical and engineering community to apply. Martin mentioned that technical assistance is available to assist with grant writing, and we provide help throughout the process. **No action was taken on this item.**

III. WASTE CONTAMINATION REDUCTION PLAN

Antonio Baldon, Director of the Division of Waste Management, provided an update on the progress of the *Contamination Reduction Workgroup*. He provided an overview of the project, which originated from the *Waste Digester Task Force* and aims to examine and reduce contamination rates in Lexington's recycling and yard waste streams. The workgroup has met monthly in 2025 to develop a recycling and yard waste contamination reduction plan for implementation by December 31, 2025. The goal of the comprehensive plan is to reduce inbound contamination rates, which are currently 35% for recycling and

60% for yard waste, both of which are significantly higher than the national average of 17%. The workgroup includes members specializing in operations management, collections, enforcement efforts, education and outreach, and recycling and yard waste facility management. Baldon explained how they took the frontline workforce on a tour of the facility, which highlighted areas for improvement. In the first week of May, postcards outlining items that can and cannot be recycled were sent to residents. There will be ongoing outreach, including mass media and social media, as well as tabling events. In March and April 2025, LFUCG Waste Management conducted audits to identify the types and locations of contamination on LFUCG residential recycling routes. The residential recycling route audit revealed that they collected 2.4 million pounds of recycling across 64 routes. They identified different types of contamination, with the worst offenders being car parts, medical waste, and food waste. The proposed next steps include additional routes for commercial and multi-family businesses, as well as business routes, private haulers utilizing the MRF (Materials Recovery Facility), and the downtown route with twice-daily pickup. Changes to the carts include adopting national standards for color, implementing RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tags to track carts, and imprinting on lids to indicate acceptable materials. The proposal would also include developing processes for city service curbside audits, and incorporating standards for contamination levels, with green indicating "pass", yellow indicating "needs work", and red indicating "fail". Notifications such as postcards, yard signs, and "Oops tags" will be provided to customers. Ultimately, the city must assess the consequences of ongoing contamination. The draft curbside process ensures regular auditing of all routes, with a focus on removing carts after three serious violations have occurred. The red strikes would fall off after 12 months, and there is a provision for carts to be reissued after that time or with proof of new residency.

Baldon explained that we will roll the new carts out slowly, and when a replacement cart is necessary, we will deliver a new one. When asked about the industry standard, Baldon said the national contamination rate is 17%. In the Midwest, it hovers around 20%, and we are currently at 34%, which is an achievable goal. Baldon said they will utilize the PIE (Public Information and Engagement) team to educate residents on private streets or in the 12th District. Currently, there is no cart removal process in place; the city will implement this process after providing the necessary education. When asked if the workgroup considered a larger container for returning and recycling empty shipping boxes, Baldon said they discussed potentially having different-sized carts. Baldon explained that there are semi-automated and fully automated operations on residential collection. When asked if LFUCG has considered drop-off locations for recycling, Albright explained that the city has offered these in the past, but due to illegal dumping at these locations, they had to be removed. There was concern that removing a cart would mean the residents would be unable to recycle. Baldon clarified that, after some time, education, and agreement to use it properly, the cart would be returned. LFUCG will provide a cart when a new resident moves in. When asked if there is a composting component to the contamination reduction plan, Baldon said they are starting with recycling, education, and enforcement. They will also examine other waste streams, such as yard waste, which will be addressed in the third phase. **No action was taken on this item.**

IV. ITEMS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

No Action was taken on this item.

The meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.