



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmembers Clarke, Henry

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Informational Hearing - Recycling - Yard Waste

FOR the purpose of requesting the Director of Public Works, the Bureau Head of Solid Waste, and the Recycling Coordinator to report to the City Council on the feasibility of providing for the recycling of yard waste; the fiscal impact of removing yard waste from the solid waste stream; and the estimated time needed to convert to a new method of yard waste disposal throughout Baltimore City.

Recitals

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that yard waste accounts for nearly 1/5th (over 31 million tons) of all garbage generated in the United States each year, making yard waste the second largest component, by weight, of the municipal solid waste stream. The amount of yard waste generally varies from region to region during different seasons and from one year to the next. During peak months in the summer and fall, yard waste can represent as much as 25% to 50% of municipal solid waste.

Across the nation, composting is gaining increased attention as an environmentally sound way to manage yard waste materials such as leaves, grass clippings, brush, and tree prunings. Since these materials are relatively clean and biodegradable, the EPA finds disposal in landfills to be unnecessary and a waste of space. In addition, as yard waste decomposes in landfills, it generates methane gas and acidic leachate. Methane is an odorless, colorless gas that is released as organic materials decompose and can seep underground and into nearby buildings, where it has the potential to explode, and the acidic leachate can make other waste constituents more mobile and therefore more toxic.

In 1988, our neighbor to the north adopted the Pennsylvania Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act (Act 101) that set a goal of reducing Pennsylvania's municipal waste disposal by 25% over 10 years, and, in part, requires communities to collect yard waste for composting and prohibits landfills from accepting truckloads of yard waste for disposal. Act 101 encourages municipalities to establish leaf composting programs and provides recycling grants to help offset costs. Currently, more than 350 municipal leaf composting facilities are in operation in Pennsylvania. Leaf composting facilities that meet the State Department of Environmental Protection guidelines do not require a permit to operate.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, that administers the state's program adopted in 1992, offers the following guidelines for establishing a municipal composting program:

- **Quantity of Material:** Determining the amount of yard waste that will be available can be done through the use of established generation rates or actual weight studies.
- **Equipment:** Equipment for a composting program must be able to handle movement, turning, watering, screening, and monitoring of the material.
- **Material Collection:** Collection of yard waste for a municipal program can be separated into three categories: dropoff, curbside pickup in bags or other containers, or bulk pickup where the leaves are collected loose off the street.
- **Facility Siting:** Land requirement will be dependent on the volume of yard waste to be collected and the level of technology to be employed. In general, one acre of land can support 4,000 to 6,000 cubic yards of loose material.
- **Staffing:** A staff that is dedicated and that understands the material and the composting process is needed to ensure a successful program.
- **Public Education:** Education is a vital component of any successful composting program, should start as soon as the planning process is initiated, and should be continuous to maintain interest and participation.
- **Marketing/End Use:** There are a number of uses for compost. As a soil amendment, it improves the texture, porosity and water holding capacity; it also increases the organic content of the soil. For mulch, it is placed around plants to suppress weeds, modify soil temperature, and preserve moisture. On slopes it can be used for stabilization and reduction of soil erosion. In a greenhouse or nursery, it can be used as one of the components of a potting soil mix.

Yard waste, when handled properly, can be recycled to support a variety of projects including residential landscaping, farming, professional nurseries, and public agency landscaping of median strips, parks, recreation areas, and other public property. The EPA's Yard Waste Composting, a Study of Eight Programs found the cost of composting ranged from \$11- \$102 per ton, and the avoided landfill disposal fees ranged between \$5 - \$137 per ton; however, the price of preserving precious landfill space is priceless.

In Baltimore City, the processing of yard waste is limited. The Department of Public Works provides for the collection of unlimited bagged leaves one day of the week from the beginning of October of one year through the end of January of the next - an approach not only environmentally unfriendly, but wasteful as well. As the City institutes the One Plus One program to protect the environment by producing less waste and recycling more, it is only appropriate that the issue of yard waste be addressed to produce an equally beneficial outcome.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Director of Public Works, the Bureau Head of Solid Waste, and the Recycling Coordinator are requested to report to the City Council on the feasibility of providing for the recycling of yard waste; the fiscal impact of removing yard waste from the solid waste stream; and the estimated time needed to convert to a new method of yard waste disposal throughout Baltimore City.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Director of the Department of Public Works, the Bureau Head of Solid Waste, the Recycling Coordinator, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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