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Council recommends garbage collection rate hike

By Nick Marnell



Garbage collection in Moraga Dec. 29 Photo Nick Marnell

The Moraga Town Council Dec. 9 quietly recommended a 6.75% garbage collection rate increase for residents starting in March. The recommendation passed unanimously with no council discussion or public input.

Solid waste disposal in Moraga is managed by the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority, a joint powers authority operating as RecycleSmart. The authority contracts with Republic Services to collect trash and recyclables from homes and businesses, and with Mt. Diablo Recycling to package the recycled product and sell or otherwise dispose of it. The JPA negotiates rates annually with the contractors for five Contra Costa County municipalities and unincorporated portions of the county.

Moraga Council Member Renata Sos sits on the RecycleSmart board of directors.

"The rates set for each jurisdiction are based on a variety of jurisdiction-specific factors such as garbage vehicle impact fees that are collected by the jurisdiction, rate increases in prior years, rates charged by neighboring jurisdictions, and reserve levels that are used as a hedge against significant future rate increases," Sos said.

Every year, Republic must submit to the JPA a rate request application. "Republic's compensation from the rate application is allocated out to the member agencies based on their annual tonnage, annual route hours and number of accounts," said Ken Etherington, RecycleSmart executive director.

The rate application is a complex document including 36 spreadsheets that cover labor charges, capital requirements, tonnage, and revenue requirements for the upcoming year. The application shows that in the last fiscal year, Republic collected more than 4,450 tons of solid waste in Moraga from residential and commercial properties, plus 4,800 tons of organic waste and 2,900 tons of recyclable material. Those were the lowest tonnage figures of the member JPA municipalities.

Republic states in its application that the 2021 revenue requirement for Moraga is \$4.59 million, also the lowest among JPA municipalities. Etherington broke down the Moraga total at \$2.97 million for hauler compensation, \$842,000 in vehicle impact fees, \$174,000 in recycling costs and \$602,000 in franchise fees and other expenses.

Under the proposed 2021 agreement, in order for Republic to reach its revenue requirement, monthly rates for Moraga residential service would rise to \$41.10 for a 32-gallon container, and commercial rates would increase between \$15.07 and \$45.21, depending on the level of service. Though Moraga produces the lowest solid waste tonnage among the JPA member municipalities, the town's container rate is second highest, behind only Orinda's.

The municipalities will enter into year seven of a 10-year franchise agreement with the contractors. The RecycleSmart board plans to adopt the 2021 rates at a public hearing Jan. 28, with the new rates to be effective March 1.

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