
Compost Sale Strategy

Recommendation

That the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services recommend to City Council:

1. That a pilot program for providing small quantities of compost to residents at no charge, be approved; and
2. That a rate of \$15 per cubic yard be approved for bulk purchases of materials from the compost depots, including finished compost, mulch, topsoil and fire logs.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline a proposed compost sale strategy, including a no-charge pilot program for residents and a bulk rate for larger quantities of compost materials.

Report Highlights

1. Finished compost material will be available later this season. In response to requests from the community, the Administration is proposing a new strategy to make compost available to residents at no charge.
2. A Dig-Your-Own compost pilot program could be implemented in the fall of 2017. This approach would significantly reduce costs and resources required to administer a sales program. A pilot program can also help gauge the level of community interest in compost for future planning purposes.
3. Bulk sales of compost materials could help generate revenue to offset the costs of operating the depots as well as reduce hauling costs for the City. Administration recommends that a bulk rate of \$15 per cubic yard be approved for finished compost, mulch, topsoil and fire logs from the depot.

Strategic Goal

The initiatives described in this report support the Strategic Goal of Environmental Leadership by facilitating city-wide composting and helping to eliminate the need for a new Landfill by encouraging the reuse of materials. Using compost and mulch also contributes to the 10 year strategy to improve the quality and reduce the quantity of storm water run-off that is going into the river.

Background

On April 16, 2012, Administration reported to City Council that there was enough finished compost material to start providing material to the general public.

On June 24, 2013, City Council approved the recommendations in the Composting Program Fees 2013 and 2014 report; specifically that finished compost be made available for sale to the general public at \$5 per 20 litre bag.

On May 20, 2014, City Council adopted bulk sale prices for compost and mulch as identified in the Composting Program Bulk Sales report.

Report

Requests for Finished Compost

The City Compost Depots generate a good-quality, local source of compost and mulch. The Administration receives ongoing inquiries from residents regarding how to access this material; however, there has been no program in place since the compost and mulch sale pilots in 2013 and 2014. Past sale events were limited to certain dates and were costly and time-consuming to administer. They also required significant human and financial resources that were not readily available and compost sale revenues did not cover the costs of administering the sales. In 2015 and 2016, funding pressures limited the ability to fully process all materials. Some finished materials were provided to Parks and community gardens, however, no public sales were offered in 2015 or 2016.

In the spring of 2017, the Administration released an Expression of Interest to determine whether there were any businesses or organizations who were interested in delivering a compost sale program for residents on behalf of the City. No responses were received.

Finished compost will be available later in 2017 and the Administration has been reviewing options to meet the community's requests for compost materials, while maintaining fiscal responsibility. Based on requests from residents and lessons learned from past compost sales, the Administration is proposing a new, low-cost strategy to make this material readily available to residents through a Dig-Your-Own compost program.

Dig-Your-Own Compost Pilot Program

Commencing in the fall of 2017, the Administration is proposing to offer small quantities (less than one cubic yard) of finished compost or mulch to residents who visit the West Compost Depot during regular operating hours. The total quantity available will be dependent upon the inputs this season, as well as quantities required by Parks and community gardens. The material for residents will be offered on a first-come, first serve basis.

A Dig-Your-Own compost program is anticipated to significantly reduce costs associated with staffing, labour and cash handling requirements of a public compost sale, while providing residents with the opportunity to benefit from the community compost inventory. Furthermore, a pilot compost sale program can help determine the level of interest for compost in the community and can provide data for planning or designing a permanent option for future compost sales. Compost sales can also encourage new or continued use of the compost depots, which in turn diverts more materials away from the Landfill.

This program is intended to provide residents with locally produced compost and mulch, which can help generate awareness of the benefits of compost. For residents interested

in larger quantities, as well as businesses or organizations who may be interested, the Administration is proposing a bulk sales option for materials from the compost depots.

Bulk Rates for Large Quantities of Materials

In 2014, the rates for compost and mulch were based on recovering costs of processing those materials. With compost rates at \$12 per cubic yard to \$50 per cubic yard (depending on load size) and mulch rates at \$20 per cubic yard, the bulk sales program resulted in little interest and low sales and may have been due to the price point. The Administration proposes that a new rate of \$15 per cubic yard be approved for bulk sales. Although the proposed rate would not recover full processing costs, the sale of these materials could provide a revenue source to offset the operating costs of the compost depots. Furthermore, in order to ensure there is adequate space to accept new materials at the depots, the City may incur costs to transport finished material. The materials removed by residents and bulk sales would be a cost savings for any future material hauling. The bulk rate would apply to anyone (residents, organizations or businesses) who may be interested in obtaining materials from the compost depot. Pending availability, these materials could include finished compost, mulch, topsoil, and fire logs.

Options to the Recommendation

City Council may choose to not proceed with the Dig-Your-Own Compost pilot program at this time. Alternatively, City Council may choose to establish a rate for small quantities of compost for residents. This option is not recommended as there is currently no funding or resources available to manage the cash handling and financial controls that are required to meet internal control standards.

City Council may also choose to set a different rate for bulk sales of materials from the compost depots which could be greater or less than the proposed price of \$15 per cubic yard.

Communication Plan

A communications strategy for the Dig-Your-Own compost and mulch program will include a news release, news conference, social media messaging, depot signage, and updated information on the saskatoon.ca/compost website. Bulk rates for compost materials will also be posted on the website.

Financial Implications

The Compost Depot Operations fall under the Waste Services Utility. Costs associated with a Dig-Your-Own compost program are anticipated to be minimal since existing depot staff and resources will be utilized. Any revenue received from bulk sales will be used to offset the cost of operating the depots.

At this time, only a preliminary estimate has been made. The Administration estimates that the sales volume will be approximately 5,000 cubic yards of the 10,000 cubic yards in inventory, resulting in potential revenues of \$75,000. Small, non-charge annual volumes could be up to 300 cubic yards or the equivalent of \$4,500 in foregone

revenue. Administration will include sales volumes and additional program updates in the Integrated Waste Management Annual Report.

Environmental Implications

Using compost and mulch in yards and gardens absorbs and slows down storm water run-off which can reduce potential pollutants from entering the river. The use of compost also increases the soil's ability to hold water, which reduces the need for outdoor watering.

In addition, compost fertilizes and improves soil structure, reduces soil compaction, and boosts the number of good microbes in the soil. Mulch keeps soil temperatures more consistent, reduces weed growth, attracts beneficial insects, and protects plants over the winter.

The use of compost and mulch directly supports the goals of the City of Saskatoon's Healthy Yards program, which provides education and training on composting, outdoor water conservation, storm water management, growing food, boulevard gardening, pesticide reduction, and other healthy yard practices.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no public and/or stakeholder involvement, policy, privacy, or CPTED considerations or implications.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

An update on the compost sale strategy will be provided in the 2017 Integrated Waste Management Annual Report.

Public Notice

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Report Approval

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