

From: [REDACTED]
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Please keep Recology as our waste hauling service provider!
Date: Saturday, January 4, 2025 9:06:51 PM

Dear Mayor Zollman, Vice Mayor McLewis, and Councilmembers Carter, Hinton, and Maurer,

I was shocked and dismayed to read the staff report for the Jan 7th meeting that recommends that the City end its garbage hauling contract with Recology and switch to Sonoma County Resource Recovery (SCRR). As a city resident and residential Recology customer I have been very happy with Recology's service over the years. As community environmental and labor advocate, Recology has been an amazing partner in efforts to reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions. I am very upset that the council is considering ending the city's contract with Recology. For reasons I outline below, this move would be financially detrimental to residents and businesses, disincentive compost and recycling, and would reverse gains we have made as a community to reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

I have read through the City of Sebastopol [staff report](#) for the Solid Waste Collection Agreement agenda item for the January 7th meeting, and I am deeply concerned that the comparison of rates for Recology and SCRR on pages 4 and 5 do not include the rates for compost and recycling collection. I reached out to my contacts on the Recology Waste Zero team and found out that, when compost and recycling collection rates are added back in, (as they absolutely must be, given that commercial and residential customers are required to divert organics as per state law [SB 1383](#)), SCRR's service rates will actually be higher for most residential and commercial customers in Sebastopol. For example, residential customers with the most common garbage collection cart size, 32-gallons, would have a monthly fee with SCRR that is \$4 higher than it would be with Recology. For many commercial businesses, the rate discrepancy is much more drastic. For example, a customer with a 3 yd garbage, 3 yd recycle, and 96 gallon compost service would pay **\$709.59 more per month** with SCRR than with Recology. For businesses with large quantities of organic waste (restaurants, grocery stores), the fee differential is even much higher than this. Our local businesses should not be forced to take on this increase, or forced to choose not to recycle or compost in order to keep their hauling rates down. Furthermore, decreased organics diversion rates (compost) will result in increased greenhouse gas emissions from Sebastopol residents and businesses.

The staff report gives SCRR a higher score on "Service Rates and Value" (p. 3), presumably because of omission of compost and recycle rates. When compost and recycle services are added back into the calculation, SCRR's proposal will cost the City, its residents, and its businesses \$786,000 more in the first year alone.

As a public school teacher, the Recology Waste Zero team has been instrumental over many years in school compost and recycling programs that I have run or advised on Analy, Orchard View and Apple Blossom, and Parkside. Recology is always generous in donating collection bins, signage, and service for school events and daily waste diversion. Recology

employees have also served as mentors for Sebastopol students from Analy and Orchard View high schools for each of the past six years of the Santa Rosa Junior College Climate Action Night yearly event that I co-chair. Losing the Recology Waste Zero team's help would be devastating to these programs.

I am also deeply concerned that SCRR does not have a recycling facility in Sonoma County, as Recology does, so has to haul recyclables much longer distances, further increasing greenhouse gas emissions. Given this, and the fact customers will be disincentivized to compost and recycle under SCRR's rate structure, it is incomprehensible to me why the staff report gives SCRR an almost equal score to Recology in the category of "Sustainability" (p. 3).

As an advocate for good, living wage jobs in our community, the proposal to drop Recology also alarms me. Recology workers are unionized, represented by a local chapter of the Teamsters, whereas SCRR is a non-union company. The fact that my husband and I have been able to afford to raise our family in Sebastopol is due in large part to us both having union jobs (California Teachers Association/ California Faculty Association). So many families have had to leave Sonoma County because their jobs cannot cover the high cost of living, leading to school closures, among other losses. If Sebastopol drops Recology, numerous family-sustaining, union jobs will be lost. This does not seem to have been taken into account in the assignment of a lower score for Recology in the "Community Employment and Engagement" (p. 3) category.

For the above economic and environmental reasons, I urge the council to keep Recology as Sebastopol's solid waste hauler.

Sincerely,
Sunny Galbraith
Sebastopol Resident
Teacher