



Via Email

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The City of Sebastopol's New Solid Waste Collection Agreement and New Services

Honorable Mayor Zollman, Vice Mayor McLewis, and Councilmembers Carter, Hinton, and Maurer:

Eight years ago, a few local and well-known waste industry professionals, all the culmination of generations of experience, heads of companies that heave and haul thousands of tons of materials each day, came together to assist in resolving a crisis in Sonoma County caused in part by Recology's predecessor. For the past seven years SCRR has run concierge, compliant waste collection services in Sonoma County founded upon an ethos of honest, direct communications with our municipal clients and our individual customers we are so honored to serve.

We strive to responsibly manage our customers' discarded materials through the delivery of world-class customer service and targeted, tailored collection services. As evidence of this, your staff received a glowing report from our contract manager in the Town of Windsor. We are also aware you received a letter from Recology Sonoma-Marin claiming the City's analysis is incomplete and that Sonoma County Resource Recovery's (SCRR's) proposal is the higher priced proposal. We are writing to express confidence in the City's process and the *Staff Report*, noting that the City's *Request for Proposals (RFP)* was a multi-year process and that Recology has had the advantage all along the way.

We especially want to reassure Sebastopol commercial customers that we are highly sensitive to the hardship a rate increase could bring upon them. We know the lingering effects of the pandemic—which will likely continue—gutted many businesses and families. We know the struggle to recover is real, and we are genuinely here to help. We want to assure the City and Sebastopol businesses we will work hand-in-hand with each and every business to hear and address their concerns and creatively solve all of them.

The truth is, to come to its conclusions, Recology pushed new rates through an old model. The contract you are contemplating is quite different from the contract Recology functions under, and it represents a positive departure both from that contract and the current service model, which has provided a rather untailed and too uniform level of service to customers.

Also, Recology's central argument in its letter and the matter of this contract concerns revenue, as opposed to value and service. The scoring criteria in the *Staff Report* indicated that Service Rates and Value occupied the top spot with 30 total points to be awarded. However, Recology's letter only addressed rates, and we believe this is because there is less to say about the value of their service offerings.

The ton is evolving based on emergent materials entering the waste stream and new regulations, and that requires new approaches to materials management, collection, and downstream technologies for resource recovery. The waste industry sits at the end of a dynamic supply chain, which requires a flexible, hands-on approach that rests on understanding the business operations of commercial customers, the plight of working families, and which therefore requires a tailored approach and appropriate technology to safely and efficiently manage the entire waste stream, increase landfill diversion, and provide tracking, monitoring, and reporting to customers and the City.

We see ourselves as an active participant in this supply chain, view ourselves as a solutions provider, and seek to provide more value. Our proposal brings new solutions and fair and lower rates to residential customers and parity between commercial and residential customers, to ease any pre-existing subsidy between the two. This better protects Sebastopol residents now and in the long run. Our proposal also provides the ability for commercial customers to become active participants in the management of the materials they discard through SCRR's provision of recycling technical assistance—a proven approach for managing solid waste expense and minimizing landfilling of materials.

I would like to outline the key features of this approach.

- Business types generate waste materials unique to their operations, and the size of the business drives output, just as the makeup and size of a family drive the wastes they set out at the curb each week. Our proposal features a hands-on results-oriented approach that is tailored to the specific needs of each customer. Our intensive and holistic approach to increasing diversion, customer engagement and satisfaction includes the following protocols.
 - As soon as this contract is signed we will begin working methodically with Sebastopol commercial customers, meeting personally with each and surveying their properties, inquiring about and observing their operations, waste stream generation rates, and materials composition to supply them with a proposal that meets these needs, and so that our drivers aren't moving air and needlessly wearing Sebastopol streets or creating unnecessary congestion.
 - We will meticulously annotate our customer database, documenting any site conditions and constraints to inform our routing approach.
 - Our recommendations for container types and sizes by service type will be accompanied by an offer of free training (recycling technical assistance). We will provide this upon request initially and throughout the contract term as many times as requested or needed at no charge to the customer.
 - If the customer needs in-house or collection point signage we will provide that, even if that means creating something new just for them.
 - We will access our library of outreach materials, refreshing and updating them as needed to create materials they may need for internal distribution to their employees, tenants, and customers. We will provide those free of charge.
 - We will benchmark, monitor, and track their progress toward zero landfill throughout the contract term.
- We deliver service through a team approach where our operations management team, our drivers, and customer service team all work together to identify and address any customer issues and permanently resolve them to the customer's satisfaction. We don't just wait for the problem to show up.

SCRR will be an active participant in the community, as it is known for being, working together with civic, business, and community groups to make sure all customers know the services they are entitled to. We will work hand in hand with customers and the City to ensure that all waste collection needs are addressed and that all customers are happy with their services.

As the *Staff Report* summarizes:

The Panel concluded that SCRR demonstrated the best overall ability to meet the City's needs, highlighted by its expressed commitment to providing individualized service to the City, a highly competitive rate structure benefiting the majority of Sebastopol solid waste subscribers, and strong references from the other community it serves.

While Recology showed capability in delivering the requested services and a strong commitment to sustainability, its proposal was less tailored to the City's specific needs and offered less competitive rates. Additionally...SCRR displayed a willingness to further align its offerings to meet the City's expectations in this area. As a result, the Panel recommends selecting SCRR as the provider best positioned to deliver high-quality, cost-effective services tailored to the City's unique needs.

We concur. We contemplated tackling each of Recology's letter points item by item, but their numbers simply cannot predict the shift we know we will produce, and that we have a track record of producing, in contract years one and two especially, but also throughout the term of the new *Agreement*. We ask for patience and trust that we will produce these shifts through working through it all with all parties.

The City has an important decision before it, and we at SCRR do not take this lightly; we take our partnerships with our municipal clients very seriously, and we appreciate the hard work City Staff has completed to bring this decision to you.

If the City has any further questions or comments, please feel free to reach out directly to me on my cell phone. Your R3 representative can provide that to you.

Sincerely,

Kevin Walbridge
President and CEO
Sonoma County Resource Recovery