

Fresno City Hall pushes for lower fees to use landfill owned by Fresno County

By George
Hostetter



Garbage including food, plastics and cardboard are piled at the American Avenue landfill, which is owned and operated by Fresno County.

ERIC PAUL ZAMORA — THE FRESNO BEE [Buy Photo](#)

Fresno will continue taking its trash to a Fresno County-owned landfill. The unknown is for how much longer.

The City Council on Thursday agreed to extend the city's deal with the American Avenue landfill on a month-to-month basis. The contract ended June 30.

At Council President Steve Brandau's request, the stop-gap measure has a three-month limit. If a longer-term deal isn't settled by then, Brandau said, the city should explore other options for its garbage.

The council's action may sound like a yawner, but ratepayer money and city-county politics make it otherwise.

Fresno pays \$23 per ton to take its trash to the county's landfill. According to city officials, Fresno accounts for more than 70% of the landfill's business. The county has gotten used to operating the landfill based on the city's reliable stream of money.

That money comes from Fresno's ratepayers. Now that the long-term landfill contract is dead, City Hall is telling the

county it doesn't want to pay \$23 per ton (called a tipping fee). City officials, who will soon bring new residential trash rates to the council, want to pay a smaller tipping fee and pass the savings to trash customers.

City officials say there are other landfills should the county refuse to see things their way.

Losing a customer the size of Fresno would be a crusher to a county landfill with long-established operational costs. The American Avenue landfill also has smaller municipal customers. The ratepayers in those small towns could feel a hit to the pocketbook should Fresno depart.

Fresno Public Utilities Assistant Director Jerry Schuber said Tuesday's negotiations with county officials resulted in a significant change in county attitude. Schuber gave no details, adding only that he expects to bring an offer to the council within 45 days that features a tipping fee much to City Hall's liking.

County Administrative Officer John Navarrette earlier this week said he's reviewing how things are run at the landfill. He said hours of operation might change in an effort to reduce costs.

In other action, the council:

* Approved a lease/purchase deal that will deliver 82 new vehicles to the police department. There will be 50 patrol cars (Dodge Chargers), 18 undercover vehicles and 14 motorcycles. Many of the city's 250 patrol cars have 125,000 to 150,000 miles on them and have been in service for seven or eight years. City officials try to replace patrol cars every five years/100,000 miles. City Hall, like many Fresnans, responded to the Great Recession by making existing assets survive a little longer. Council members and City Manager Bruce Rudd briefly discussed a future full of traffic cops on electric motorcycles. All agreed the technology isn't here yet to make that smart. No one on the dais saw much charm in electric two-wheelers.

* Designated seven properties on Huntington Boulevard in southeast Fresno to the Local Register of Historic Resources. They are the Ralph and Jenny Watson Home, the C.M. and Gertrude Prescott Home, the Fred J. and Mary Dow Home, the Clarence and Bessie Bernhauer Home, the F. Rex and Vera Sporleder Home, the Fred and Virginia Billings Home and the Eugene and Elsie Brinker Home.

* Gave a hearty laugh and round of applause to Brandau when the council president identified the Five B's of Public Speaking: "Be Brief, Brother, Be Brief." Brandau gave all credit to his source for this truth: Deputy Police Chief Keith Foster.

Contact George Hostetter: ghostetter@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6272.

Copyright

© 2014 www.fresnobee.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.fresnobee.com>