October 2020

RE: Mesa’s Recycling Program Status

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we have navigated through these uncertain times. As you may recall, the difficult decision to temporarily collect material from both the blue recycle and green yard waste barrels with the same truck was made in anticipation of the impact that COVID-19 would have on our solid waste operations. At that time, our goal was to resume recycle service as soon as possible. However, in addition to COVID-19, our recycling program has also been impacted by other variables over the past year.

The Challenges

Before blue barrel items can be recycled, they must first be sorted at a materials recovery facility (MRF). Prior to COVID-19, we had recycling contracts with 3 different MRF vendors. Unfortunately, our largest vendor had a facility fire last October. They are currently closed but have indicated that they expect to reopen in 2021. Despite the fire, we were able to divert some of our material to our other 2 vendors.

In November 2019, one of our other vendors, who was in the sixth year of their ten-year contract, submitted a six-month notice of cancellation unless their contract terms were renegotiated. We were in the negotiation process with the vendor when the COVID-19 pandemic began in March. The negotiation process continued during this time but despite the City’s good faith attempt to reach a mutually agreeable contract with the vendor, the City could not accept the final terms proposed which would have included the following:

- Significant increase in processing fees for all inbound tonnage
- Newly added transportation fees
- Stricter requirements on accepted items
- No assurances that the material would be recycled by the vendor

Because an agreement was not reached, the vendor elected to terminate their contract with the City of Mesa on May 10th.

This has left us with one remaining vendor. However, due to their facility capacity limits, they are not able to accept all of Mesa’s recyclable material.

The Plan – Effective October 26th

Effective the week of October 26th, all blue recycle barrel and green yard waste barrel routes will be separated and once again serviced by two different trucks. Green yard waste material will be taken to its normal processing facility and the maximum amount of blue barrel material will be taken to our sole operating MRF vendor. Once our other vendor rebuilds their MRF, we will be able to deliver additional quantities of recyclable material to them. We will also be exploring alternative long-term options and presenting them to City Council in Spring/Summer 2021.

We Need Your Help - When in Doubt, Keep it Out.

All of us play a part in the success or failure of our community’s recycling efforts. It is important to remember that without clean material, we do not have a sustainable program. Recycling vendors have implemented tighter contamination restrictions and charge significant penalty fees for non-accepted material.

Our list of accepted items changed in October 2019 due to the current recycling market conditions and we ask that you please only place these items in your blue recycle barrel. Placing non-accepted or dirty items, even with the best intentions, in the
recycle barrel significantly increases costs, reduces the marketability of materials and can even ruin perfectly good recyclable material.

Not sure if an item is accepted? Download our flyer or use our Recycle Right Wizard feature, both available at MesaRecycles.org, to find out.

How Do We Ensure Proper Recycle Barrel Use?

Random recycle barrel inspections have resumed and are conducted daily by solid waste quality assurance inspectors. A clearly marked notification tag will be left behind noting any areas of concern they find during their inspection (we also leave thank you notes for our A+ recyclers!). Residents who continue to contaminate or misuse the blue recycle barrel will have their container removed and they will be suspended from the program. There may also be instances where if the recycle barrel is found to be extremely contaminated, it will warrant immediate removal.

Again, we thank you for your patience and for your recycling efforts. If you have any questions, please contact Customer Service at (480) 644-2221, visit MesaRecycles.org or send an email to waste.info@mesaaz.gov.