

Boulder likely to increase trash tax for 'Recycle Row'

By Heath Urie

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BOULDER, Colo. Taking out the trash in Boulder could soon get a little more expensive, with the City Council indicating Tuesday it would increase the trash tax to fund a new facility for three recycling facilities.

The council voted 6-1 to direct city staffers to plan on increasing the trash tax by an average of \$17 per year for most residential customers and by \$53 per year for commercial customers.

The increases would generate up to \$4.7 million over 20 years to pay for a central recycling facility for ReSource, a used building material donation and sales yard run by the Center for Resource Conservation, Eco-Cycle and the Center for Hard to Recycle Materials.

The estimated \$5.4 million project would be a joint venture between the city and Boulder County, with the city taking responsibility for the bulk of the costs.

Boulder voters in 1994 approved a maximum trash tax cap of \$3.50 per month for residential customers that would generate about \$600,000 per year for the city.

The plan is part of the city's Zero-Waste initiative and "Recycle Row," which is envisioned as a one-mile stretch of 63rd Street between Arapahoe and Valmont Roads that provides a single location for special recycling needs.

Keith Desrosiers, executive director of the Center for ReSource Conservation, said more than 7.3 million pounds of trash would be diverted from landfills annually if the facilities can expand and relocate.

"This has been happening for a long time, this conversation," Desrosiers said. "We need a city and a county partnership."

Dan Matsch, manager of Boulder's Eco-Cycle and CHaRM, said customers brought in about 2.3

million pounds of materials to those centers last year, with interest still rising.

Matsch said the current facility has "proven the idea," but "what we really need is a large building."

"I'm very confident in saying the day we open up (with a larger facility) we will have 100 percent increase in traffic," he told the council.

Councilwoman Angelique Espinoza was the only member to oppose the move. She said she refused to raise taxes in the current economy.

"I want to make a statement about affordability," she said.

Councilwoman Lisa Morzel, however, said raising a relatively small tax for a "good cause" would be widely accepted in Boulder.

"This is the time that it is absolutely necessary," Morzel said. "I think this takes us in a new, exciting direction."

A final decision on where such a shared facility might go has not been reached.

City staffers will take the council's direction and move forward working with county officials to find a permanent site for the combined center. The council would then revisit the issue and decide whether to officially increase the tax.



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