



DATE: May 13, 2021
TO: Programs and Administration Committee
FROM: Pat Cabrera, Administrative Services Director
SUBJECT: Overview of Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Program and Fees

SUMMARY

The HHW program is designed to keep household hazardous waste out of the landfill. The County of Alameda and City of Fremont provide collection/disposal services to Alameda County residents. These services are funded by fees collected by the Waste Management Authority (WMA). At the May 13, 2021 Programs and Administration Committee meeting, staff will provide an overview of the HHW program and associated fees.

DISCUSSION

Household Hazardous Waste Program

Because household hazardous waste cannot be disposed in landfills, the County of Alameda and City of Fremont provide HHW disposal services to Alameda County residents through a network of drop-off centers and one-day disposal events at various locations around the county. This program is funded by fees collected by the WMA, discussed in more detail below. The WMA has separate agreements with the County of Alameda and City of Fremont for the program and the allocation of revenues.

Current HHW Fee Structure

The HHW program is funded by two fees – a per-ton fee on solid waste, and a collection and disposal fee collected primarily on the property tax roll.

The per-ton fee was established in 1990. It is set at \$2.15 per ton and is collected for all solid waste tons disposed within Alameda County, transferred through a county solid waste facility but disposed out-of-county, and franchise waste direct-hauled and disposed out-of-county. The fee was intended to support the then three Alameda County HHW facilities and program, with the Hayward and Livermore facilities opening in 1993 and the Oakland facility opening in 1996. A fourth facility, located in Fremont, opened in 2008.

With increased demand for HHW disposal services and anticipated declining revenues from the per-ton fee, the WMA evaluated options for the future of the program beginning in 2012. The WMA determined that the per-ton fee alone would not support the program without a drastic cut in services. On May 28, 2014, the WMA approved Ordinance 2014-1, which established a household hazardous waste collection and disposal fee capped at \$9.55 per household per year.¹ The household fee was established to supplement the \$2.15 per ton

¹ Fee on the property tax roll was \$9.54, or \$4.77 per billing since the assessor bills in two equal installments

fee to support the four countywide HHW facilities and one-day collection events. The ordinance required that the household fee be adjusted each year to take into account revenues from the per-ton fee and the PaintCare program (an industry run extended producer responsibility program that collects unused paint for reuse and proper disposal). The ordinance also included a sunset provision effective June 20, 2024.

The fee adopted by the WMA in FY 14-15 was set at \$9.55 per residential unit and remained in effect through FY 15-16. Consistent with the ordinance, beginning in FY 16-17, the fee was adjusted based on a formula that took into account the per-ton fee revenue and PaintCare offsets. When those amounts exceeded the annual thresholds outlined in the ordinance, the fee was reduced for the following year then “reset” back to \$9.55 for the next year’s calculation. Based on this formula the fee dropped to \$8.60 in FY 16-17, \$8.46 in FY 17-18, \$7.40 in FY 18-19, and \$6.64 in FY 19-20. The annual fee calculation was cumbersome and the annual change (although lower) was potentially confusing for residents.

As such, staff engaged the services of HF&H Consultants to analyze various funding scenarios and determined that the annual fee of \$6.64 per residential unit would be sufficient to fund the program for several years. On September 25, 2019, the WMA adopted Ordinance 2019-01 amending Ordinance 2014-1, which removed the sunset provision and established an annual fee of \$6.64 per residential unit through June 20, 2024. The ordinance requires an analysis of the HHW program’s operational and funding needs, no later than March 31, 2024, and every five years thereafter to determine whether the fee needs to be adjusted, either lower or higher, provided that the fee does not exceed the original annual fee of \$9.55 per residential unit. The amended ordinance still requires annual approval by the WMA to place the fee on the property tax roll, which is scheduled for May 26, 2021.

The WMA updated its Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with both the County and the City of Fremont in 2020. These agreements remain in effect contingent upon the respective parties complying with the terms of their MOUs including any revisions to the reimbursement limits resulting from the analysis discussed above. An overview of these agreements are as follows:

MOU with County of Alameda

Oakland Facility	Hayward Facility	Livermore Facility
Household Program		
Wed-Fri 9-2:30 Sat 9-4:00	Thur-Fri 9-2:30 Sat 9-4:00	Thur-Fri 9-2:30 Sat 9-4:00
Accept E-Waste	Accept E-Waste	Accept E-waste
Small Business program		
Tuesdays (excluding holidays) Residential landlord program (no fee for residential rental properties) Drop in for universal waste/latex paint, other materials by appointment	Alternate Tuesdays or Wednesdays 2x per month Residential landlord program Drop in for universal waste/latex paint, other materials by appointment	Alternate Tuesdays or Wednesdays 2x per month Residential landlord program Drop in for universal waste/latex paint, other materials by appointment

Small businesses that qualify as Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generators (CESQGs) as defined in the Health and Safety Code section 258.18.1 and the code of Federal Regulations 40, Section 261.5 may also use the HHW facilities for a fee (with the exception of residential rental properties as noted above).

In addition to the operations of the facilities described in the table, the County is required to host at least eight one-day events per year.

Household participation goals for County facilities is 60,000 per year. Household participation increased from approximately 33,000 in FY 13-14 to approximately 55,000 in FY 18-19. However, due to COVID-19 Shelter In Place orders, County HHW facilities were closed from March 16, 2020 through June 23, 2020, resulting in household participation declining to approximately 41,000. Prior to the closure order, County facilities were on track to exceed FY 18-19 totals. Additionally, the County held four one-day events and was forced to cancel four events.

Due to COVID restrictions, and as a safety precaution for HHW staff, StopWaste implemented an online appointment system in English and Spanish for Livermore, Oakland and Hayward. According to participant Google reviews and feedback from HHW frontline staff, this process has worked well and not reduced the number of visits to the facilities. In fact, household participation at County facilities through March 31, 2021 has already exceeded 40,000. Unfortunately, the County has only been able to hold one one-day event due to either Shelter In Place requirements, or more recently, the need to use large venues suitable for collection events for vaccination sites.

MOU with City of Fremont

The City of Fremont contracts with BLT Enterprises to provide transfer station/recyclables processing services at the Fremont Transfer Station, which includes an HHW drop off center. The center is convenient to residents of Fremont, Union City and Newark and is available to all Alameda County residents. The HHW operational parameters for the Fremont Facility are listed below:

Fremont Facility
Open to households Wed-Fri: 8:30 am -2:30 pm Sat: 8 am-4:00 pm E-Waste Accepted
Small Businesses including Residential Landlord Program: Tuesdays between 9 am and 2 pm Drop in for universal waste & latex paint, other materials by appointment

Fremont has consistently met or exceeded its goal of serving 13,000 households per year. In particular, Fremont exceeded participation by approximately 1,100 transactions in FY 19-20 compared to FY 18-19 (totaling over 18,000 household transactions), as it remained open as an essential service during the pandemic and accommodated users that would have normally used one of the County facilities. This fiscal year household participation through March 31, 2021 has exceeded 15,000.

The program for both the County and Fremont has clearly been successful based on the levels of participation and feedback from residents. The recent revision to its collection and disposal fee ensures that it will be sufficiently funded to continue to meet the ongoing needs of Alameda County residents.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.