

MONTEREY COUNTY WEEKLY

Four Companies Vie To Take Over Lucrative Rights To Haul Peninsula's Waste

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Garbage Bucks

Updated waste hauling contracts will help the region comply with a state mandate to achieve 75 percent waste diversion by 2020.

After decades of unchallenged contracts, Waste Management's exclusive franchise right to haul waste on the Peninsula is set to expire in 2015.

For the first time ever, the Monterey Regional Waste Management District (MRWMD) has opened up those contracts for competitive bidding.

Four hauling companies – including Houston-based Waste Management – are vying to fill those contracts. On Nov. 18 at Seaside City Hall, each delivered a presentation outlining their philosophies and qualifications for the job. The three other companies are GreenWaste Recovery of San Jose, Bayside Sanitation of South San Francisco and Monarch Resource Recovery of Fresno.

Rob Hilton, a consultant helping the district manage the upcoming transition, laid out the district's hopes to improve service. For one, the new contracts will usher in a universal three-bin system across the Peninsula (Seaside and Marina currently don't have bins for organic waste), and add commercial organics collection, bulky item re-use collection and improved public education and outreach.

The duration of the contract will be 10 years, about the length of the useful life for much of the capital equipment that the companies will have to invest in to provide service.

None of the competitors disclosed the rates users might expect to pay; Hilton says revealing that information now could compromise the district's negotiating power until Dec. 20, when the district's evaluation committee will send its recommendations to the board of directors, who will then send it to the region's cities. Waste Management, under the current contract, received \$13.4 million for calendar year 2011.

The themes of each presentation were nearly identical, with each company emphasizing their expertise and commitment to customer service and sustainability. But from a waste management perspective, GreenWaste Recovery stood above the pack.

Emily Hanson, GreenWaste's director of business development, says their company is "not looking at recyclability, we're looking at the recoverability." They boast an incredibly high diversion rate (percentage of waste that is diverted from a landfill) for the items from the recycling bins they service (95-98 percent), and all of their trash and compost collection gets sorted at an innovative "wet" facility that allows them to divert 72-75 percent of the items that end up in the garbage bins.

The other companies also had impressive claims. Bayside Sanitation emphasized their success in San Jose, and said the city told them it was the smoothest transition they'd ever had in switching service providers. Waste Management touts the collective "1,100 years" of experience of their drivers, and an impeccable safety record of only three on-the-job injuries in their years servicing the Peninsula.

Monarch Resource Recovery plans to set up a local headquarters and promises a customer-service line to allow customers "to talk to someone who lives here."

Once the MRWMD board sends its recommendations, each Peninsula city has until June to decide which company to use. The city of Monterey has its own contractors and isn't part of process.