

**UNIVERSITY CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION**

5th Floor of City Hall

6801 Delmar

August 14, 2017

5:00 p.m.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The City Council Study Session was held in Council Chambers on the fifth floor of City Hall, on Monday, August 14, 2017. Mayor Welsch called the Study Session to order at 5:01 p.m. In addition, the following members of Council were present:

Councilmember Rod Jennings
Councilmember Paulette Carr
Councilmember Steven McMahon
Councilmember Terry Crow; *(arrives at 5:25 p.m.)*
Councilmember Michael Glickert
Councilmember Bwayne Smotherson

Also in attendance was Interim City Manager, Charles Adams; City Counsel, John F. Mulligan, Jr.; Director of Public Works and Parks, Sinan Alpaslan, Project Manager, Jenny Wendt, and Paul Eppen of EMS Marketing.

Hearing no requests to amend the Agenda, Mayor Welsch proceeded as follows:

AGENDA

(Requested by Interim City Manager, Charles Adams)

1. Composting and Mulching Operations

Mr. Adams stated the Director of Public Works and Parks was present to guide Council through this presentation.

Sinan Alpaslan, Director of Public Works and Parks, stated he, along with Jenny Wendt, his Senior Project Manager, would like to present a summary of the City's composting, mulching and yard waste operations.

PowerPoint Presentation: A historical illustration depicting various aspects of the City's yard waste, trash, recycling and solid waste operations.

The City's storage or nursery area is located in a wooded area within close proximity to the River Des Peres southwest channel. It is controlled and regulated by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources; (DNR). In previous years the City received numerous violations and warnings from the DNR to correct problems associated with Leach-8 contaminants that were running from the processing area into the river. A temporary solution to contain and filter these contaminants prior to their release into the water was implemented. In 2011, a permanent solution was recommended to address this issue; however, the cost of the project prohibited the execution of this plan.

- All yard waste collected is processed into compost at the City's facility located at 1160 North McKnight or Ruth Park Woods and transported to the Heman Park Distribution Site for distribution.
- The task of processing; which consists of establishing wind rows, cooking and turning, was delegated to the City's Street Maintenance Division, requiring an additional allocation of manpower and resources.
- The Street Maintenance Division conducts city-wide curbside leaf collections during the fall and spring each year. The program runs for three (3) weeks in the spring and six (6) weeks in the fall.
- The amount of mulch stored at the Distribution Site also created run off of Leach-8 contaminants into the river.
- The Tub Grinder which is used to grind leaves and yard waste has reached the end of its lifecycle and needs to be replaced. The approximate cost of replacement is \$750,000.

In October of 2015, Council approved a one-year contract to outsource the City's mulching and composting operation. Although the estimated quantity of hauled waste was higher than anticipated, in order to complete this contract the contractor agreed to reduce his initial rate of 9.50 per yard to 5.50 per yard. The continuation of this contract resulted in the following:

- Eradication of issues associated with contamination.
- A reduction in workforce
- Forgoes the need to purchase a new Tub Grinder
- Total cost avoidance was \$219,400; *(the actual cost for the collection of yard waste and leaves is \$230,000 per year.)*
- Resumption of regular Street Maintenance Division-related tasks
 - Sidewalk grinding
 - Crack sealing of street pavement
 - Bridge deck maintenance; *(a lack of maintenance has resulted in this now becoming a regular task. The cost to complete this maintenance is approximately 1 million dollars per bridge.)*
 - Erection of signs; *(the City is under a federal mandate to replace all of its signs with retro-reflective type materials. No due date has been established at this time.)*
 - Pothole patching
 - Snow/Ice control
 - Leaf collection and street sweeping; *(these activities are funded by the Solid Waste Fund.)*

Social/Financial Impact:

- The cost of mulch has increased from \$8.00 per yard to \$9.00 per yard; *(this cost comes directly from the contractor because the City buys it back from them for deliveries.)*
- The cost of deliveries was increased from 35.00 to 50.00
- Deliveries are no longer made outside the Highway 270 perimeter and are only available to U City residents
- Residents can no longer receive free mulch at the Distribution Center

Public Works Survey: Per the request of City Council, surveys were issued after the completion of the one-year outsourcing contract executed in 2015. Surveys were made available via the City's website and meetings and the response rate represents approximately 2 percent of all households. The most common responses were:

- Dissatisfaction with the discontinuation of self-loadable free mulch; *(as a result many suggested that yard waste stickers be eliminated.)*
- Dissatisfaction with their inability to get less than a full cubic yard delivered
- Dissatisfaction with Friday-only delivery service
- Dissatisfaction with lack of notification and ability to provide input

Mayor Welsch asked how much revenue was being received from the sale of yard waste stickers? Mr. Alpaslan stated about \$ 80,000 a year.

Justifications:

As space becomes the major constraint for the continuation of the City's composting operations consideration must be given to different alternatives.

- Per DNR regulations, composting sites must consist of at least 10 acres; *(Ruth Park consists of 1.9 acres.)*
- Sites consisting of less than 2 acres are required to obtain a DNR Operating Permit.
- Searches conducted in the municipalities of Clayton, Ladue, Wellston and Pagedale to find a new location were unsuccessful.
- The City still has yard waste that needs to be hauled away, but at this time there is no money available for this undertaking.
- The delivery of mulch is assigned to the Parks Division who established a Friday-only delivery schedule to allow staff an opportunity to complete this task prior to the execution of their regular work activities.
- Creve Coeur contracts with Fick Supply who removes their leaves at no cost; (a \$30,000 savings)
- Ladue has recently discontinued their composting operation and now contracts with St. Louis Composting
- Clayton has been contracting with St. Louis Composting for the past three years and provides no deliveries
- Olivette has recently outsourced their composting and leaf collection out to an unknown source.
- Richmond Heights will be contracting with St. Louis Composting after losing their site to the I-64/Hanley development. They have expressed a desire to continue their operations at a new location and are open to partnership opportunities.

Recommendations:

- 1. The Green Practices Commission has recommended approval for the elimination of yard waste stickers.**
- 2. Restart of composting operations**
 - Potential for additional DNR violations
 - Costs associated with land acquisition, partnership, set-up and permits
 - \$750,000 cost for replacement of Tub Grinder

- \$450,000 estimated operational cost; *(the re-delegation of manpower will reduce this estimation to \$220,000 needed to purchase equipment.)*
 - \$750,000 for the purchase of a new Tub Grinder
3. **Continue existing outsourcing contract with St. Louis Composting;** *(\$230,000 per year.)*
 4. **Continue existing outsourcing contract with St. Louis Composting to include limited amounts of mulch delivered monthly to Heman Park Distribution Center for pick up by residents at no charge;** *(\$100,000 per year)*
 - Potential problems associated with manning the site and prohibiting use by contractors.
 5. **Continue existing outsourcing contract with St. Louis Composting to include smaller quantities of mulch for delivery;** *(the current minimum is 1 cubic yard per order.)*

Councilmember Glickert asked Mr. Alpaslan if he thought the life of the Tub Grinder could be extended for one more year? Mr. Alpaslan stated it could possibly last another year, although at this point it is costing the City almost \$2,000 a month in repairs just to keep it operational. Councilmember Glickert asked Mr. Alpaslan whether he was at liberty to identify any of the potential new locations? Mr. Alpaslan stated that they had not identified any feasible locations for the processing application. However, with some modifications, the Heman Park Distribution Center might still be appropriate for storage. He stated that the Solid Waste Manager suggested the installation of bollards to keep trailers with a Bobcat from backing into the area. The City's yard or operational station is always another option when looking at secure areas, although it could pose some safety concerns for residents because of the amount of activity that goes on there.

Mayor Welsch asked if mulch was being delivered to Ruth Park for U City in Bloom to pick up? Mr. Alpaslan stated currently U City in Bloom picks up their mulch at the Ruth Park Woods facility.

Councilmember Jennings questioned whether a smaller grinder or an alternative piece of machinery was available at a reduced price? Mr. Alpaslan stated that would depend on what is being processed. If the City's intent is to continue with its current volume his managers are telling him that they need a larger grinder. In the past when the City outsourced its secondary grinding the contractor used a larger Tub Grinder to increase throughput and efficiency. But if the decision is to only process limited quantities there is a smaller version of this model available for roughly \$400,000. Councilmember Jennings asked if a decision was made to reduce the City's output would it reduce the estimated \$450,000 for operating the facility, as well as eliminate the need to find a location with 10 acres or more? Mr. Alpaslan stated 1 acre is needed for every 5,000 cubic yards and the City's current volume is close to 40,000 cubic yards. So if this amount was reduced the estimated cost and land requirements would both be reduced. Councilmember Jennings asked how much of the 40,000 cubic yards did he think was actually being utilized by residents? Mr. Alpaslan stated that based on his experience, 20,000 cubic yards would probably be too much for residents.

Councilmember Jennings asked Mr. Alpaslan if he and his staff would follow up at a later date with their recommendations for how the City should proceed? Mr. Alpaslan stated staff's recommendation to Council is that if the City's desire is to continue with its current plan, then an RFP should be issued for outsourcing in order to receive a competitive bid. Once those are received staff will present Council with their final recommendation for approval.

Councilmember Jennings suggested that consideration be given to downsizing the mulching aspect of this operation to 15,000 cubic yards.

Ms. Wendt stated Ruth Park Woods consists of 1.9 acres and once that acreage is increased the City will be required to follow strict DNR permitting and draining regulations. However, the space required for processing is so large, that even if the quantities were reduced the current acreage would not be sufficient to handle it.

Councilmember Jennings questioned whether the site would be suitable if a phase production schedule was implemented; meaning that staff would only produce an amount feasible for the site and once that is removed or picked up the next production phase would resume? Ms. Wendt stated the problem with that scenario is that composting requires a four-week decomposing period, so there would still be a problem with storage.

Mr. Alpaslan informed Councilmember Jennings that as a result of the river, the current site is probably only adequate for processing 5,000 cubic yards.

Councilmember Crow stated in his opinion, he does not believe a small fraction of residents should dictate how this process is handled. So he would be curious to know the actual number of survey responses that indicated a desire to have access to smaller quantities of mulch? Ms. Wendt stated considering there was only a 2 percent response rate that number would be rather small. However, a smaller quantity is simply not feasible. If the delivery fee is \$50.00, plus \$9.00 per yard, even if someone wanted to purchase half a yard they would only be saving \$4.50.

Councilmember Crow questioned how the cost of deliveries was handled in Clayton? Ms. Wendt stated that all fees are paid directly to St. Louis Composting, whose delivery fee is \$80.00.

Mr. Adams stated he lives about three blocks from the composting site and he can always tell when mulch is available.

Mr. Alpaslan stated the odor nuisance created by this site is another consideration for recommending a new location

Mayor Welsch stated some of the neighbors on Crixdale expressed concerns about how remnants from the grinder would cover their cars.

Councilmember Carr asked if there was really a solid method that could be utilized by staff to monitor who receives mulch? Mr. Alpaslan stated the dates and times of this operation would have to be limited to ensure that staff was available to verify occupancy and restrict access to the site by non-residents.

He stated that it might also be possible to accommodate pickups at the yard, which is a secure area. Councilmember Carr asked Mr. Alpaslan if he anticipated that there would be times when a member of staff was unavailable or the facility was closed that it could be breached? Mr. Alpaslan stated the only way to guarantee that there were no breaches is if pickups were restricted to the City yard because there is no way to prevent that from happening at the Heman Park location.

Mayor Welsch stated she is not in favor of returning to a mulch operation because number one, the City has been dealing with DNR violations for many, many years, and she thinks both locations along the river need to be cleaned up. Secondly, the costs associated with resuming this operation are excessive and favor discontinuation. However, if the decision is made to continue it might be more economical if deliveries were limited to peak months of the year and mulch was made available for more than a two-week timeframe. Of course, a secure pickup location would have to be determined. Mr. Alpaslan stated the more access to this mulch is limited, the more feasible it will be. And limited access would also make the area easier to secure. Mayor Welsch stated years ago, she and Bob Wagoner had looked at the old Hill Behan site and talked with other cities about their interest in participating in a composting collaboration. She stated they had also talked to the Mayor of Wellston to see about utilizing an area in their industrial park, which at that point was pretty empty. But now she thinks St. Louis Composting and others have kind of moved the conversation away from such collaborations.

Councilmember Carr asked Mr. Alpaslan if he and Ms. Wendt had analyzed the data received from the survey? Mr. Alpaslan stated that they had.

2. ESM Public Relations and City Newsletter Presentation/Update

Mr. Adams stated that the owner of EMS Marketing, Mr. Paul Eppen, was here to provide Council with an update on his contract with the City.

Common Themes vs. a Collection of Articles:

Mr. Eppen thanked everyone for allowing him to make this presentation which he provided to Mr. Adams on Thursday, for Council's review.

He stated that he was the Chief Marketing Officer for several Fortune 500 companies before starting his ad agency, and one thing he thinks is important are Brand Planks; similar messages going throughout all channels so that when people think about U City they think about specific things.

A Complex Process that Requires a Strategy:

Mr. Eppen stated EMS looks at the six editions of ROARS and makes a determination about what each issue should represent. One thing he is really excited about is the upcoming "*Shop Local - Give Local*" event for the November/December edition. This edition will contain a business guide highlighting both for-profits and nonprofits while emphasizing the importance of the City coming together in a fun and exciting way.

Once a theme has been established EMS works with a wide variety of folks to produce the appropriate articles; City Council; Chamber of Commerce; department heads, the school district, et cetera.

Calendars are distributed to all interested parties to garner initial requests for information, and once that information is received it is carefully edited based on the current space limitations rather than content and sent to Mr. Adams and Tina for review.

- *EMS is limited to a certain amount of space depending on how much the City has allocated for a specific issue. So ROARS can range from an 8-page edition, up to a 16-page edition.*

An Opportunity to Do More:

Mr. Eppen stated ROARS was created to spread the good news about U City. However, the fact that it is published every other month limits the City's ability to spread the news about all the great things that are going on here.

Recommendations:

1. Electronic editions of ROARS

Today, most people consume things on an electronic device and moving in this direction is cost-effective; can increase the frequency of publications; eliminate constraints associated with the current mode of publication and provide you with the capability to attach audio and videos.

- *At this point, the assumption is that everyone would still receive a hard copy and provided with an opportunity to opt out for the electronic version.*

2. ROARS social media page

3. Reduction of hard copies from six to four

- *To print and mail costs approximately \$5,000 an issue. If half the residents opted for an electronic version there would be a cost-savings of \$2,500 per issue.*

Mr. Eppen informed Council that although none of these recommendations are reflective of an either/or strategy, he would like to see ROARS evolve.

A More Consistent Appearance:

Mr. Eppen stated that EMS has received some input with regards to the content of ROARS. And his synopsis of those contributions is whether ROARS should have a consistent look? He believes the answer to that is yes. As a result, Mr. Adams asked EMS to put together a new template for Council's review that makes ROARS look professional, inviting and readable. One issue EMS has experienced in the past is that when they try to include so much of the great information they've received in an edition it often makes it difficult to read.

Public Relations:

Mr. Eppen stated what his company does with PR is look for earned media; proactively reaching out to different news outlets that might be interested in a story about U City and pitching things to them. For example, a couple of months ago, Councilmember Crow mentioned that an event was going on with the Symphony Orchestra that represented U City well in terms of inclusion and diversity. So EMS reached out to Channel 2, and this morning they ran a segment on the Symphony.

EMS uses iNcision; an independent third party software to measure placement, i.e., circulation, viewership, and value. iNcision estimated the value of that single placement with Channel 2 to be worth about \$12,000. What that means is if you ran an ad on Fox 2 in the morning it would cost you about \$12,000 to get the same amount of coverage.

When EMS took over the City's account several years ago, the earned placements were in the neighborhood of around twenty-two to twenty-four. Last year, the earned placements were somewhere around sixty.

Mr. Eppen stated in general, he believes that all cities across the U.S. need more feel-good stories, and they are actively promoting all the good things that, unfortunately, sometimes fall to the bottom of a newscast. A lot of that is accomplished by EMS having their thumb on the pulse of what's going on. But there is a direct correlation between placements, people visiting the City, and a positive economic impact.

Councilmember Glickert stated over the weekend he was talking with some residents that live south of Delmar near the Inner belt who informed him that they were not receiving copies of ROARS. So he wanted to make sure that EMS was aware of the multiple zip codes within U City. Mr. Eppen stated he was aware and would check to see if he could determine why it was not being delivered. However, EMS only controls the file that goes to the person who does the mailing.

Councilmember Carr stated she had received complaints from several residents of Olivette who said they were receiving ROARS, whereas other residents within the city limits were not. When she attempted to remove their names from the list she was informed that it was cheaper to mail to the entire zip code.

Councilmember Carr asked if it was the City's practice to distribute copies of ROARS to public places like the library where people could pick them up if they were not receiving a copy? Mr. Eppen stated he would be happy to see that that happens. But here again, the benefit with electronic copies is the ability to expand circulation. Councilmember Carr stated while she would agree, U City has an older demographic who do not want to use the computer.

Councilmember Crow asked Mr. Eppen if there was a historical percentage of recipients he anticipated would opt-in to the electronic version? Mr. Eppen stated he would be surprised if at least 20 percent did not elect to opt-in, especially if it was promoted as a savings to the City.

Mayor Welsch asked Mr. Eppen if he could expound on how upgrades to social media could fit into the City's PR strategy? Mr. Eppen stated the basic rules for social media is that it needs to be frequent; two-thirds of it needs to be fun, and a third of it needs to be about the serious business of the entity. For instance, one of their clients is Imos Pizza who has utilized David Freeze as their spokesperson for quite some time. When David got married last summer 200 pizzas were delivered to his wedding. That delivery was tweeted and millions of people saw it. So in terms of public relations and trying to promote U City, he wants people to visit, dine and shop here. And the more people EMS can reach, the more successful they are.

Mr. Eppen stated where he sees an opportunity is with Facebook. The City's current Facebook posts have been along the lines of, *"The pool opens on Friday"*. But the goal of EMS would be to do something that's more entertaining; within the constraints of the type of entity, this is. You have an asset, but it's not being used to its full capacity to promote the City.

Almost like having a condition that could be cured by antibiotics, but you're not using them. So, he would highly recommend that the City undertake an initiative to fully utilize Facebook and Twitter.

Mayor Welsch stated she's noticed that most of the City's departments have their own Facebook page that ironically, she rarely receives. So, with the exception of the Police Department; which Mr. Adams believes should have their own page, she thinks there would be a benefit to commingling them all into one page. Mr. Eppen stated he would agree 100 percent with Mr. Adams. The Police Department is a completely different animal from the City itself, and it would be hard to mix those two from a personality standpoint. He stated that EMS has lots of clients with multiple departments, and they have always advised against the use of multiple Facebook pages. He stated Facebook can be very positive, and powerful, but it can also be a liability. So he would suggest that EMS review the Brand Planks with City staff, come to some sort of an agreement on what should be promoted, and then monitor the different channels of communications. Facebook is also very quick in terms of adoption and selling, so it's important to be concise about your message, and have a good strategy regarding what should be posted.

Mr. Eppen stated that EMS actually creates a calendar, and the month before an event occurs they present their posts to the approving authority so that nobody is ever surprised by what is being posted. Having one site will pull all of the followers from those different pages together and get more people to start sharing and building momentum.

Mayor Welsch asked Mr. Eppen if he was suggesting that EMS handle the City's social media accounts along with staff? Mr. Eppen stated there is a great economy of scale between ROARS and PR. EMS has a tremendous amount of expertise in social media and would love to use that expertise to assist U City.

Mayor Welsch asked Mr. Eppen if he would provide Mr. Adams with the financial implications associated with (1) the reduction from six editions to four; (2), the production of a digital version, and (3), managing the City's social media accounts? Mr. Eppen stated he would need to meet with Tina to get more specifics, but believes he could certainly provide that information within a couple of weeks.

Councilmember Smotherson asked Mr. Eppen why ROARS was sent to Tina for review? Mr. Eppen apologized and stated he had misspoken, the draft is sent to Mr. Adams for review. Councilmember Smotherson stated he is trying to gain a better understanding of who this task should be assigned to and how the City can develop a method of review that makes more sense than the current practice. Mr. Eppen informed Councilmember Smotherson that EMS completes this review the way that it does because that's the way it has always been done. Of course, that does not mean it's the right or the best way to do it, and they would be happy to work with Mr. Adams and Council to establish a better process.

Councilmember Smotherson stated that in order to add more variety and events that encompass all areas of the City into ROARS he would like to see other avenues explored, like the City's boards and commissions. Mr. Eppen stated EMS is excited about the evolution of this process because, in the past, their interaction was somewhat limited. Now it's becoming much broader, and frankly, the more interaction, the easier their job is. He stated it's simply a process of going from where we were, to where we want to be.

Councilmember Jennings concurred with Councilmember Smotherson's comments and suggested the possibility of recruiting individuals from commissions and encouraging them to become more active in this process.

Mr. Eppen stated a digital format would allow EMS to provide more timely information because it takes six weeks to create a hard copy and sometimes information becomes obsolete before this process is completed.

Mayor Welsch stated her understanding is that department heads are contacted because they provide a lot of the content. And then the staff liaison to the boards and commissions filters information out to them periodically because she has seen some of the reminder notices. So, although it may not be working as well as it could be, she does think there is a system in place.

Mr. Adams stated the goal of tonight's presentation was to initiate an interactive exchange of ideas that could lead to the development of a more effective process. And in his opinion, the opportunity to have a newsletter that goes out electronically would add a lot of value to the information being delivered. However, he does think that City staff should always be the ones responsible for gathering information, especially with respect to boards and commissions, because they are much more knowledgeable about the structure of these entities than EMS would be.

Councilmember Smotherson stated his main concern moving forward would be the implementation of a better review process. Mr. Adams informed Councilmember Smotherson that Mr. Eppen has been handling the City's account personally and has already taken steps within his company to ensure that the City's finished product is one that everybody can be proud of.

Councilmember Carr stated she is in favor of what she refers to as the "*Realtime dissemination of information*". And while the City seems to be doing a little of this, it does not do it enough, nor does it do it well enough. She stated that once EMS has completed their templates related to the new appearance of ROARS, she would be interested in obtaining some samples for the purpose of a discussion by members of Council. Mr. Eppen stated he would be happy to provide them.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no additional questions or comments, Mayor Welsch adjourned the Study Session at 6:15 p.m.

Larette Reese
Interim City Clerk