



# Natural Resources & Environmental Commission Agenda Report

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ITEM NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** August 24, 2021

**FROM:** Ted Gerber, Deputy Public Works Director  
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**SUBJECT:** **Recommendation of Citywide Refuse Services**

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## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Natural Resources and Environmental Commission recommend to City Council a citywide refuse service level: Curbside Service (CSS) or Backyard Service (BYS).

## **Background**

In 2016, Senate Bill 1383 (Short-Lived Climate Pollutants) was signed into law in a statewide effort to reduce short-lived climate pollutants, namely methane emissions created by organic waste. The bill established targets to achieve a 75 percent reduction in disposal of organic waste by 2025. In addition, the bill aims to rescue at least 20% of edible food for the millions of Californians experiencing food insecurity. Pursuant to SB1383, jurisdictions are mandated to provide organics collection services and require all residents and businesses to divert organic waste (yard waste, food scraps, food-soiled paper, etc.) from landfills to recycling facilities. In addition, SB1383 requires jurisdictions to establish an edible food recovery program, conduct education and outreach to the community, procure recyclable and recovered organic waste products for use within the City, secure access to recycling and edible food recovery capacity, and monitor compliance and conduct enforcement. Regulations take effect and state enforcement begins January 1, 2022. To comply with the requirements of SB1383, an amendment to the current exclusive refuse agreement between the City and Athens' Services is needed. The Athens Ad Hoc Committee (Committee) - composed of two councilmembers, two Natural Resources and Environmental Commission commissioners, and staff - was formed to advise staff on this amendment.

## **Discussion/Analysis**

The Committee recently discussed the possibility of changing the City's current refuse service from BYS to CSS, and is seeking a recommendation from the Natural Resources and Environmental Commission. SB1383 regulatory requirements can be achieved through either BYS or CSS.

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### Current Refuse Service Level - Backyard Service

Under BYB, customers collect refuse, recyclable materials, and green waste (lawn trimmings, yard trimmings, etc.) in containers in their backyard. Athens workers collect the contents of the backyard containers into pick-up trucks, which are later emptied into larger “mother trucks”, and transported to a materials recovery facility (MRF). The customer is required to keep the containers in an accessible area in their backyard and separate their green waste from the rest of their waste. No additional efforts are needed from the customer. This arrangement has been in place in the City since the first version of the exclusive refuse contract with Athens’ Services in 1996. The City of South Pasadena is one of two cities in surrounding areas of the San Gabriel Valley that is serviced by Athens Services utilizing BYB.

### Alternative Refuse Service Level - Curbside Service

Curbside Service is the collection of refuse, recyclable materials, and green waste from containers supplied by the waste hauler and rolled out to the customer’s curb on a designated day. With this system, customers are responsible for separating their refuse into three containers (refuse, recyclable materials, and green waste) and rolling out the hauler-owned containers to the curb themselves. The containers are then picked up with semi-automated front-or-side-loader trucks and transported to a MRF. Customers are responsible for rolling their containers off the curb and back onto their property after their waste has been picked up, unless they subscribe to “Roll Away” service at an additional cost. Similar to BYB, the waste hauler driver will return the containers from the curb. If the City changes to CSS, Athens’ employees who were previously operating pickup trucks will be reassigned within the company and will not lose their employment.

### Hard-to-Service Areas

Due to inaccessibility, customers in South Pasadena living in “Hard-to-Service Areas,” such as in the hills and on narrow streets, will need to continue a form of BYB, as the trucks used in CSS cannot access these locations. However, these customers will need to separate their waste appropriately, and can receive CSS containers supplied by the waste hauler. Due to the inability to use semi-automated trucks, an additional cost is incurred for customers who live in hard-to-service areas (approximately 400-700 customers). The Ad Hoc Committee will advise whether the additional cost will be applied only to the rates of customers living in hard-to-service areas, or if the costs will be spread out among all customers in South Pasadena.

### Comparative Analysis of Backyard Service and Curbside Service

Backyard Service provides customers with a valet hauling service that requires little effort from the customer. Customers do not need to take an extra step to separate out their recyclables from their regular trash and they do not need to bring out their containers to their curb on their designated trash day. This level of service is important to senior customers and those with disabilities. Furthermore, the customer-supplied containers of BYB allow customers to use containers that work best for their space, where CSS offers limited options for waste hauler-provided containers. In addition, CSS may interrupt street parking, where no additional street space is needed for BYB.

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The two service options have different environmental impacts. BYS requires the use of numerous gasoline-powered pick-up trucks, which are small enough to enter driveways. Conversely, the front-and-side-loader trucks used with CSS run on compressed natural gas (CNG), which produce significantly less greenhouse gas emissions than gasoline-powered truck. Use of CNG trucks instead of gasoline trucks also aligns with the City's emission reduction goals as outlined in the Climate Action Plan. When waste is source-separated, as it is in CSS, recycling rates can be higher, as recyclable materials are less likely to become contaminated. In addition, transferring the responsibility for separating waste to the customer can raise awareness of the amount of waste one produces, further inspiring behavioral changes that benefit both the environment and the customer. Lastly, when BYS waste is emptied into uncovered truck beds, it may litter the streets as the vehicles move. With CSS, waste is emptied into larger encapsulated trucks and litter is contained.

### **Fiscal Impact**

There is a significant cost difference between the two refuse service levels. Though the exact rate difference is still being determined by Athens, City staff have investigated similar rates in surrounding cities and have found that CSS rates are approximately 20-25% less than BYS rates. The City's current residential refuse rate for BYS once per week is \$48.98. The average current residential refuse rate for CSS of surrounding cities is \$37.89 per week. These rates do not include the required organics diversion services, which will increase residential rates by 8.78%.

In addition, customers may face more frequent contamination fees with CSS since they will be responsible for sorting their waste into three categories (refuse, recyclable materials, and green/organic waste) as opposed to two with BYS (mixed refuse/recyclable and green/organic waste).

The following table summarizes the differences between BYS and CSS.

	<b>BACKYARD SERVICE</b>	<b>CURBSIDE SERVICE</b>
<b>Service Level</b>	Little effort from customer; best service for senior and disabled citizens	Moderate effort required from customer; may not be suitable for senior and disabled citizens, unless “Roll Away” service is implemented at an additional cost
<b>Containers</b>	Supplied by customer	Supplied by waste hauler
<b>Spacing</b>	Custom space, no interruptions with street parking	Large space required for three containers may restrict street parking (usual size is 96 gallons, however alternate sizes are available)
<b>Hauling Vehicle Type</b>	Gasoline pick-up trucks + CNG front-and-side-loading trucks	CNG front-and-side-loading trucks
<b>Contamination</b>	More contamination of recyclable materials due to mixture with regular waste	Less contamination since material is source separated and not mixed
<b>Awareness</b>	Less impact on waste reduction awareness	Source separating increases awareness of waste produced and can inspire behavioral changes
<b>Litter</b>	Waste is emptied into uncovered truck bed, moderate amount of litter	Waste is contained, little to no litter
<b>Cost</b>	Costs remain the same; less contamination fees	Costs approximately 20-25% less than BYS; more potential contamination fees

**Next Steps**

1. The Athens’ Ad Hoc Committee will continue discussing the amendment of the exclusive refuse agreement with NREC’s recommendation.
2. The amendment and SB1383 ordinance will be brought to City Council for approval before the January 1, 2022 enforcement date.

**Public Notification of Agenda Item**

The public was made aware that this item was to be considered this evening by virtue of its inclusion on the legally publicly noticed agenda, posting of the same agenda and reports on the City’s website and/or notice in the *South Pasadena Review* and/or the *Pasadena Star-News*.