



**Board of Commissioners**

Fran Miron, Chair, District 1  
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Wayne A. Johnson, District 4  
Lisa Weik, District 5

**BOARD WORKSHOP  
June 9, 2020 - 9:00 AM**

**On June 9, 2020, the County Board will be conducting a workshop meeting at its regular location of the Board Room, Washington County Government Center, 14949 62nd Street North, Stillwater MN. The public may attend the workshop in person at the board room. Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Emergency Declaration declared by the Governor of the State of Minnesota and Declaration of Local Emergency issued by the Washington County Board of Commissioners on March 17, 2020, some board members may participate by telephone or other electronic means and the workshop will be conducted pursuant to and in compliance with Minnesota Statute 13D.021.**

**In addition, any members of the public who wish to share their comments or concerns on the issue(s) being discussed in the workshop, may provide that comment via email at [administration@co.washington.mn.us](mailto:administration@co.washington.mn.us) or by telephone at 651-430-6001. This is in addition to the public's ability to attend the workshop in person at the Washington County Government Center at the address listed above. An comments or concerns shared, either prior to or during the board workshop, will be provided to each county commissioner.**

1. **Board Workshop with Public Health and Environment - Lowell Johnson, Director**
  - A. Discussion of yard waste services in Washington County

**\* Please note: No official county business or votes will take place during Workshop Only meetings.**



# Request for Board Action

BOARD MEETING DATE:  
June 9, 2020

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER:  
1.A

## Commissioner's Report

### Department Information

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Public Health and Environment	REQUESTOR: Jeff Travis, Senior Environmental Program Manager	REQUESTOR PHONE:
PRESENTER(S): Jeff Travis	MEDIA CONTACT: Jeff Travis	

### Agenda Item Details

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR REQUEST: Discussion of yard waste services in Washington County		
AGENDA YOU ARE REQUESTING TIME ON: Workshop	ARE YOU SEEKING APPROVAL OF A CONTRACT? No	ESTIMATED DURATION: 45 minutes
IS THIS MANDATED? No	EXPLANATION OF MANDATE:	
BACKGROUND/JUSTIFICATION: An evaluation of yard waste services in Washington County was conducted by the Department of Public Health and Environment in 2016 and reviewed with the County Board. Direction was given to establish yard waste sites in the north and central parts of the county to fill in gaps in service where private or other public yard waste service was not available or services limited.  The County opened its northern yard waste collection site in November 2019 and established reciprocal use of yard waste sites with Ramsey County in September 2019.  A privately operated yard waste site in Woodbury gave notice to the community on June 1 that it will cease operations on June 14, which will change service availability for county residents in that area.  The workshop will review options for the county to consider for provision of service in light of the closing of this facility.		
PREVIOUS ACTION ON REQUEST/OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED? Yard Waste Service study completed in 2016. Board workshops have been held in 2016 and periodically since then as services were begun in the northern portion of Washington County.		

### Budget Impact

YEAR:	UNBUDGETED AMOUNT: \$
FUNDING DESCRIPTION:	

**Approvals**

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Lowell Johnson, Public Health/Env Director 6/3/2020

Kevin Corbid, County Administrator 6/4/2020

# Woodbury Area Yard Waste Site Discussion



# Yard Waste Program Background

- Yard waste program evaluation in 2016
  - Received direction to fill gaps in yard waste collection services
- Opened northern county-operated yard waste site in November 2019
- Established reciprocal use agreement with Ramsey County in September 2019
- Central yard waste facility site search this year, 2022 construction



Northern County Yard Waste Site

# Composting Concepts, Inc. Communication

- May 19 – Composting Concepts, Inc. email to Washington County Board and Woodbury City Council
  - Intend to cease operations June 13, 2020, unless the county or city takes over operations through purchase or lease
- May 20 – PHE responded to email indicating the county would discuss
- June 1 – Composting Concepts, Inc. announced closure to customers

# Site and Operations

- Located in Woodbury
- Accepts materials from residential and commercial customers
- Accepts leaves, grass, garden waste, brush, trees and logs
  - On-site composting and grinding
- Finished compost and mulch sold to residential and commercial customers



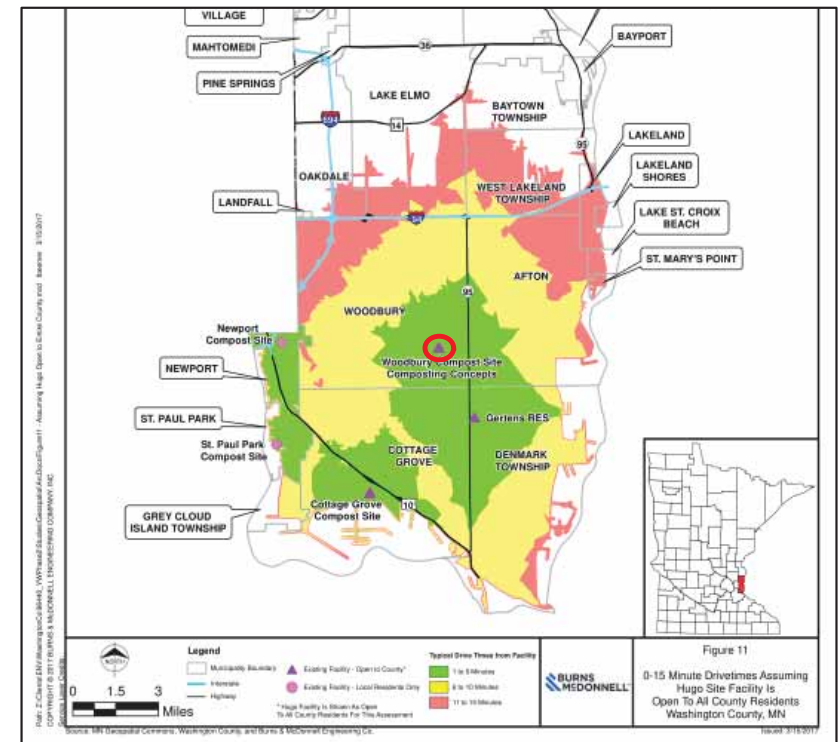
# City of Woodbury Considerations

- Property currently operated under an interim conditional use permit (CUP)
  - Requires yard waste activity to cease when surrounding properties develop into residential use (next 5 years)
- Guided to be low-density residential (3.5 units/acre) in Woodbury Comprehensive Plan.
- The City is interested in continued service but not taking over operations
- The City is willing to discuss transfer of the CUP to the county (with approval from city council) for operation of a **temporary** yard waste site



# Yard Waste Program Considerations

- Continuity of yard waste collection services for residents
- Planning for permanent yard waste site to north of Environmental Center



# Potential Options

- Purchase Compost Concepts site and establish county-operated yard waste site
- Nothing at this time, develop yard waste site on county property in future
- Provide subsidy to current owner for residential yard waste only
- Lease site for an interim yard waste site, and establish permanent site on county property in coming years

# Proposed Lease Option

- Negotiate lease for Composting Concepts, Inc. property to ensure continuity of yard waste collection services
- Provide free yard waste collection services to residents
  - Determine services for commercial customers, if any
- 3-5 year lease to allow time for establishment of permanent yard waste collection facility

# Annual Site Operating Costs

- Expected operating cost of \$180,000 for residential yard waste program
- Utilize County Environmental Charge for funding

Item	Cost
Leaves/grass hauling & composting	\$100,000
Wood grinding	\$20,000
General operational costs	\$30,000
Attendant	\$29,760
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$179,760</b>

Source: Washington County program evaluation with Burns and McDonnell

# Central Yard Waste Site Search

- Central yard waste site search began in January 2020
- Search team led by Building Services and Public Health & Environment
  - Developed site criteria
- Real estate consultant reviewed market and did not find any parcels meeting criteria
  - Looking for collaborative opportunities

# Site Search Criteria

- **Minimum site requirements include:**
  - 10 acres of usable land
  - Access to electrical power for security lighting
- **Preferred site requirements:**
  - City and resident supported location
  - Not immediately adjacent to residential areas
  - Located on road that would not require addition of left-turn lanes
  - Ample queuing space to prevent traffic backing up onto road
  - Existing, or space to add, screening from neighbors
  - Provides equitable YW access to residents (<15 minute drive-time)

## Next steps

- Determine ability for existing providers (Gertens, Rumpca, Ramsey County sites) to serve the community needs
- Work with Public Works to identify a potential cost of a lease with Composting Concepts
- Determine timeline and communications for impact to yard waste collection services, if any
- Identify contractor to manage yard waste site operations, if needed
- Review yard waste evaluation for potential updates due to closure of Compost Concepts

Questions?





May 21, 2020

## Potential Closure of Composting Concepts in Woodbury – Policy Discussion

### Present Issue:

Composting Concepts is a privately-operated yard and tree waste collection site located ¼ mile from the Environmental Center in Woodbury. On May 19, Composting Concepts sent an email to the Washington County Board, as well as the City of Woodbury Council, indicating that they intend to cease operations and collection of yard waste at their site on June 13, 2020, unless Washington County or the City of Woodbury takes over operations through the purchase or lease of the site.

### Background:

PHE has received policy direction from the Board to fill in gaps in yard waste collection services through the development of county-operated yard waste sites. The County took over operations of the City of Hugo's yard waste site in November 2019, while also implementing a reciprocal use agreement with Ramsey County in September 2019 for use of Ramsey County yard waste sites by Washington County residents. In addition, the County is presently conducting a search for a property for a central yard waste facility which is slated for construction in the CIP in 2022. The County has also identified space for a replacement yard waste facility for Composting Concepts north of the Environmental Center at the site of the current South Shop. However, this would be dependent on the construction of a new South Shop Public Works facility. Additionally, the City of Cottage Grove has indicated that their yard waste site, currently operated by Rumpca, is likely to close in the next 3-5 years, and has expressed interest in the County establishing a permanent site in or near Cottage Grove.

Composting Concepts is located on a twenty acre property, at which they receive both soft-bodied yard and garden waste, brush, and trees and logs from residential and commercial customers. The soft-bodied material is composted on-site into compost/soil, and the brush, trees and logs are ground onsite into mulch. Both finished compost and mulch are sold from the site to residential and commercial customers.

The Composting Concepts property is currently operated under an interim conditional use permit (CUP) from the City of Woodbury that requires yard waste activity to cease when surrounding properties develop into residential use. The property is guided to be low-density residential (3.5 units/acre) according to the Woodbury Comprehensive Plan. The City is not interested in taking over operations of a yard waste site but there is a desire for this service to continue for residents. The City is willing to discuss transfer of the CUP to the county (with approval from city council) for operation of an interim yard waste site at the property to ensure continuity of service. However, the County would need to provide assurances that it will exit the site when residential development takes place in the area. City staff estimate that development of this and surrounding properties will begin in about five years, and at about that time yard waste operations would need to be discontinued.



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[www.co.washington.mn.us](http://www.co.washington.mn.us)

*Washington County is an equal opportunity organization and employer*

**Policy Option #1:** Washington County takes no action to purchase or lease the site and Composting Concepts closes on June 13. Washington County would work to establish a permanent yard waste site in the area to reduce the length of the yard waste service interruption.

**Policy Considerations:**

- If Composting Concepts closes without an immediate replacement operation, residents would lose a long-time area service. Residents would need to divert to other area sites, including Gerten's in Denmark Township (6 minute drive from Composting Concepts), Rumpca in Cottage Grove (13 minute drive), Washington County Northern site (36 minute drive), or a Ramsey County yard waste site (minimum 16 minute drive), until the County is able to establish a permanent yard waste site in the area.
- Gerten's likely could handle the commercial customers currently served by Composting Concepts but it is unclear whether they could handle all of the residential customers.
- PHE is coordinating with Public Works to plan for the establishment of a permanent yard waste site to the north of the Environmental Center at the site of the current South Shop facility once the new South Shop is constructed.
- Composting Concepts has attributed the potential closure to the loss of customers due to the County's establishment of a yard waste site in Hugo and the implementation of a reciprocal use agreement with Ramsey County yard waste sites. However, the Hugo site and reciprocal use agreement were implemented in the fall of 2019, and with the impacts of COVID-19, it is unclear whether this is the primary reason behind the closure. Nonetheless, the County will want to consider the implications of a narrative that the County developed a yard waste program that competed with a private business that ultimately closed.
- This option would be the lowest cost option as the County would not be purchasing or leasing the Composting Concepts property for a yard waste site.

**Policy Option #2:** Purchase Composting Concepts site and transition to a county-operated yard waste site.

**Policy Considerations:**

- The City of Woodbury has made it clear that the property is intended for residential development and not a permanent yard waste site. If the County were to purchase the property, it would need to determine how to sell the property in the short-term (within 5 years) once residential development occurs in the area.
- Composting Concepts property is approximately 20 acres, which is significantly larger than acreage required for a yard waste site.
- The County would need to determine whether it would be interested in receiving yard waste from commercial customers, and if so, the implications for private businesses that collect yard waste from commercial customers. Additionally, the County would need to determine if this would impact the decision to only accept residential yard waste at the Hugo site.
- This would likely be the highest cost option as the County would be purchasing the Composting Concepts property, in addition to paying for any required site improvements and operating costs.

**Policy Option #3:** Washington County leases the property from Composting Concepts temporarily and operates the site as an interim yard waste site until a permanent yard waste site can be established in the area.

**Policy Considerations:**

- This would avoid an interruption of yard waste services for residents in Woodbury if the County were able to establish a permanent yard waste site in the area before the end of the lease.
- The County would need to determine whether it would be interested in receiving yard waste from commercial customers, and if so, the implications for private businesses that collect yard waste from commercial customers. Additionally, the County would need to determine if this would impact the decision to only accept residential yard waste at the Hugo site.
- The County would need to determine the costs of the lease, costs for any required site improvements as well as operating costs.

**Policy Option #4:** Provide financial assistance to Composting Concepts to continue providing residential yard waste collection services to offset the impacts of the Hugo yard waste site and reciprocal use agreement with Ramsey County.

**Policy Considerations:**

- If Composting Concepts were open to this idea, then the County would need to work with Composting Concepts to determine the subsidy required to offset the impacts to their business.
- The County would also likely need to consider subsidies for other privately-operated yard waste sites such as Gerten's and Rumpca's.
- The County would still need to establish a permanent yard waste site in the area, likely on the 60-acre parcel south of the Environmental Center.