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June 9, 2020

**Washington County Board of Commissioners workshop discussion on yard waste sites**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in a workshop Tuesday, June 9, to review yard waste services provided throughout the county. The workshop was in response to a May 19 email sent to the county by the owners of Composting Concepts in Woodbury announcing their intent to close operations of their yard waste and compost business by the middle of June.

In 2016, the county completed an analysis of yard waste services. That analysis showed the southern portion of the county was being well served in a variety of ways, including by private businesses, but gaps in service delivery existed in the north and central portions of the county. In those areas, the leadership in municipalities expressed no desire to provide the service and no private businesses had stepped forward to provide the service.

In 2019, the county opened a temporary location for residential yard waste service in the City of Hugo to serve the northern portion of the county and entered into a reciprocal use agreement with Ramsey County, allowing residents of both counties to use county yard waste facilities in either county.

Based on input from stakeholders, including the current owners of Composting Concepts, the county did not locate a site in the central portion of the county, so as not to compete with the private businesses providing the service.

During the June 9 workshop, staff from the Department of Public Health & Environment provided an update on the 2016 evaluation and the actions taken by the board as a result of that study. Staff also provided information on the services being provided in the southern part of the county, including Composting Concepts in Woodbury, Gerten's in Denmark Township, and Rumpca in Cottage Grove.

The Composting Concepts property is currently operated under an interim special use permit (SUP) 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 per acre), according to the Woodbury Comprehensive Plan. The city staff has stated that the city is not interested in taking over operations of a yard waste site, but that there is a desire for this service to continue for residents.

The Gerten's site in Denmark Township, located off Manning Avenue and 70<sup>th</sup> Street, is also a privately owned and operated site that accepts residential and commercial yard and tree waste. The Cottage Grove site is on private land, and the City of Cottage Grove contracts with a private entity (Rumpca) for the operation of the site.

After discussion, the County Board directed staff to meet with the owners of Composting Concepts as soon as possible to discuss options for the on-going operation of the facility for use by county residents in Woodbury and the surrounding communities. The board also directed staff to meet with the two other privately run composting and yard waste facilities in the southern part of the county. Finally, the board asked staff to work with the City of Woodbury staff to clarify the special use permit necessary to operate a yard waste and compost site on Composting Concepts property, the zoning of the underlying land, and a timeline for development of the property.

The County Board reiterated its support of the private sector efforts to provide this service and remains committed to only providing services in the portions of the county where no private sector business is interested in providing the services the residents expect to receive.

The County Board agreed there is an urgency to address this issue and an interest to continue its discussion of this topic at a workshop later in June or early July.

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