Clean Water Services
Clean Water Advisory Commission
Meeting Notes

May 9, 2018

Attendance
The meeting was attended by Commission Vice Chair Mike McKillip (District 3/Rogers) and members Molly Brown (District 2/Malinowski), Lori Hennings (Environmental), John Jackson (Agriculture), Art Larrance (At-Large/Duyck), Judy Olsen (Agriculture), Stu Peterson (Builder-Developer), Erin Poor (District 1/Schouten), Richard Vial (District 4/Terry), David Waffle (Cities/non-voting), and Matt Wellner (Builder-Developer), with Diane Taniguchi-Dennis (Clean Water Services District Deputy General Manager) sitting in for Bill Gaffi (District General Manager/non-voting).

Commission Chair Tony Weller (Builder-Developer) and members Kevin Wolfe (Business), and Bill Gaffi (Clean Water Services District General Manager/non-voting) were not in attendance.

Present from Clean Water Services were Nora Curtis (Conveyance Systems Department Director), Karen DeBaker (Communications Supervisor), Mark Jockers (Government and Public Affairs Manager), Ryan Sandhu (Field Operations Division Manager), Bryan Thistle (SWM Facility Supervisor), and James Vitko (Line Maintenance Supervisor).

1. Call to Order
In the absence of Mr. Weller, Vice Chair Mike McKillip, called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM in the Tualatin Room at the Clean Water Services Administrative Building Complex in Hillsboro, OR.

2. Previous Meeting Notes
There were no comments regarding the meeting notes from March 14, 2018.

3. Leaf Program Criteria and Draft Program Alternatives
Mr. Sandhu reviewed the charge to the Commission from the Clean Water Services Board of Directors regarding the Leaf Program, shared revised program criteria based on comments at the last meeting, and outlined several possible program options developed by staff after hearing ideas at the last meeting ***(presentation attached).*** The Commission is charged with reviewing the Leaf Program, evaluating alternatives, and making a recommendation to the Board. Clean Water Services operates its leaf program in the areas that it serves directly; partner cities run their own versions in different ways. The Leaf Program began in the mid-1990's as a proactive way to decrease disruptive and often expensive staff call-outs in a few specific neighborhoods which routinely had flooding issues during storm events. While protecting water quality was not the primary reason for beginning the program, flooding—and the leaves themselves—can negatively

affect water quality. The purpose of tonight's discussion is to finalize the revised program criteria and take a first look at potential program alternatives.

Mr. Sandhu discussed the revisions to the proposed program criteria from the last meeting. Based on comments from Commission members, staff added, subtracted, and clarified to refine the original 10 items into three main categories, each with several key components that he outlined during the presentation:

1. Meets Program Purpose/Effectiveness
2. Cost
3. Ease of Implementation

A more detailed list of revised criteria and definitions was also included in the pre-meeting packet. Mr. Sandhu explained that two of the original proposed criteria were eliminated. "Social equity," which was seen as difficult to interpret and measure, was replaced with a general "equitability" component under the "Ease of Implementation" criterion. "Comparison to other jurisdictions" was not seen as a legitimate influence for determining what Clean Water Services should do. The evaluation approach was also revised, with a more general system (similar to the full/half/empty circles used by a popular consumer publication) felt to be more useful than the originally proposed numerical scoring system.

Mr. Sandhu briefly reviewed the current Leaf Program and outlined the six proposed program alternatives, noting that elements of some could be combined with others:

1. Continue program as is, perhaps with some options/adjustments
2. Expand leaf drop days and locations to serve all
3. Provide curbside pick-up for all
4. Turn over leaf collection to franchise garbage haulers
5. Partner with a non-profit group to expand service w/out additional cost
6. Discontinue program—no leaf drop days, no curbside pick-up

A list of the alternatives and an explanation of each one was also included in the pre-meeting packet. Mr. Sandhu asked for comments/discussion regarding options that should be added or removed. He also asked for input about what information/data would be needed for the effective evaluation of each alternative against the finalized criteria.

An additional program option emerged from the discussion: Fix underlying problems by identifying areas where substandard storm drain systems may be contributing to flooding, and upgrading that infrastructure. This activity might be financed from an existing dedicated fund for small projects and/or with some of the monies currently being spent on the leaf collection program, or possibly with a LID (Local Improvement District) for very large projects.

Commission members said it would be helpful to have more information about:

1. Stormwater system improvements that have been made since 1990s which may have reduced the likelihood of flooding in pick-up areas
2. Location/frequency of current flooding-related calls
3. Relationship of tree canopy to location/frequency of current flooding-related calls
4. Areas where inadequate storm drain system may contribute to flooding, whether inside or outside leaf pick-up boundaries, and costs for upgrading those drains
5. Number of flooding-related call-outs that could be done for the same cost as the leaf program;
6. Estimated change in call volume if curbside pick-up were eliminated, based on call volume from heavily-treed areas that have flooding problems but don't have curbside pick-up
7. Costs of other flood-related activities (over-flowing catch basin, clogged ditch inlet, etc.) compared to cost of leaf program
8. Amount of leaves gathered in collection program compared to the total leaf volume in the county

Commission members encouraged staff to use LIDAR to screen leaf canopy areas, and to publicize the franchise waste hauler option for leaf disposal, regardless of the leaf program alternative(s) ultimately selected.

Mr. Sandhu reminded the group that the alternatives discussed are not mutually exclusive and may not be the only possibilities. The final recommendation might include desirable aspects of several different options, and the program can be further revised if needed.

Mr. Sandhu and others will provide the information requested. Commission members will evaluate options in August and finalize recommendations to the Board this fall.

Questions and comments related to the Leaf Program Criteria and Draft Program Alternatives are listed in the Appendix.

4. Announcements

The Budget Committee will meet this Friday at 8:30 AM.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 13, though based on potential agenda items it seems likely we will skip the June and July dates and meet again August 8.

5. Adjournment

Mr. Larrance adjourned the meeting at 8:04 PM.

(Meeting notes compiled by Karen DeBaker, Mark Jockers, and Sue Baumgartner)

Appendix

Clean Water Services Advisory Commission Meeting Notes
May 9, 2018

Questions and comments regarding Leaf Program Criteria and Draft Program Alternatives:

1. **General comments**
   - 1.1. How important is the Leaf Program for water quality—wouldn't leaves falling just be considered a natural occurrence?
     - 1.1.1. There is some published evidence that removing such organic material does help with dissolved oxygen levels in a stream, but the current Leaf Program addresses only a small portion of all the leaves that fall within the District. We might want to develop that data comparing Leaf Program leaves to total leaves across the county/basin.

   - 1.2. Please talk a little more about the "agency risk" element of the "Cost" criterion:
     - 1.2.1. Everything we do, we have some sort of risk. One type of risk is just the risk of running the program—occasionally a rock flies out of a machine and breaks a window; we have large equipment operating very close to cars; these are risks we have now with the current program, but we would want to consider that in looking at an alternative. The other type of risk might be if we discontinued the residential program and some property or structure was damaged by flooding.

   - 1.3. What is the workers' compensation record associated with Leaf Program activities?
     - 1.3.1. Can only think of one worker injury; the greater risk to the agency would be property damage from accident or flooding.
     - 1.3.2. The leaf drop-off days are more labor-intensive than the leaf pick-up operations, but still relatively low injury risk.

   - 1.4. Is the Leaf Program part of the NPDES (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System) permit—is it a requirement? If you start making changes, would future requirements become more stringent?
     - 1.4.1. The permit includes a general performance standard that requires some sort of leaf collection activity or a public education program. The performance standard was written broadly to allow for many possible approaches, including activities that we and our partner cities were already doing. All the possible changes we are talking about are within the existing performance standard, which by extension meets the permit requirements.

   - 1.5. How many households benefit from the leaf pick-up program and what does it cost?

1.5.1. About 14% of the customers served directly by Clean Water Services, or about 10,000 out of 70,000 tax lots. The annual cost is about $350,000 which is for curbside pick-up and drop off days.

1.6. Were the (original) pick-up area boundaries based on calls about flooding?
1.6.1. Yes, flooding-related calls were tracked and mapped in the mid-1990s and boundary lines were developed from that. It was/is a bit of a patchwork, but definitely falls into specific problem areas.
1.6.2. That was awhile ago—the maps and boundary lines should be re-evaluated as part of any changes that are made.

1.7. Is there anything that would prohibit us from just charging $3/month to those 10,000 owners who receive the pick-up service?
1.7.1. No prohibition comes to mind; there would be some administrative issues.
1.7.2. We do have that ability to just implement a charge, but would prefer to have it be a choice (similar to the way a neighborhood would vote on whether to form a local improvement district).
1.7.3. It would be worth looking into whether we could (legally) require folks in certain (flood-prone) areas to have leaf pick-up service, and charge them.

1.8. Have there been stormwater system improvements in any of these (pick-up) areas that might have solved the flooding problem?
1.8.1. Yes, there is that potential because of our Small Works program and our catch basin replacement program over the past 10 years or so. That would be good to map and compare.

1.9. Does Clean Water Services place the sandbags that are out all around the county?
1.9.1. No, those are likely from the county to protect storm drains during their right-of-way maintenance activities, but could also be from private parties.

1.10. How do cities fund their leaf-related program activities?
1.10.1. They might use stormwater system maintenance fees, or they might add a surcharge. All partner cities must have some form of a leaf program, which they fund using the local share of their rates, not money they collect on behalf of Clean Water Services for sanitary sewer and stormwater system services. They are all funded similarly, even though they may be doing different things.
1.10.2. So it is built into their total charges and there is not an opt-out or opt-in?
1.10.2.1. Yes. As an example, Hillsboro does a one-time leaf pick-up throughout the entire city; it takes them several months to complete so is probably done more from a city service perspective than from a flooding perspective, but everyone pays for it.

2. **Alternative 1—Status Quo with options**
2.1. Would all these leaves, or any kind of byproduct, have a paying market in agriculture or elsewhere?

2.1.1. We've done some looking into that. For example, someone in the UK is making a product similar to Pres-to-Log®. There might be a number of things we could do to create an end product that could help offset costs.

2.1.2. Leaves could serve as organic matter to improve soil quality, but would not necessarily be suitable as a fertilizer—the initial decomposition process actually uses up nitrogen and it is not until decomposition is complete that any nutrients become available to plants.

2.1.2.1. There could also be street or household contaminants in leaves that were applied to crops.

2.1.3. Current arrangement with a local farmer simply gives Clean Water Services a place to go with leaves, and gives the farmer some organic material to use as a soil amendment. It is not a composting operation, which would require specific practices and be subject to regulations.

3. Alternative 2—Serve entire area with expanded dropoff days/locations

3.1. It could be said that we are already serving the "entire area" with the dropoff days at two different sites, but as an example of what could be done to expand, Beaverton last year had 18 dropoff sites just within the city limits.

3.1.1. Would want to stay within the existing budget, but could spread out those staff hours over a longer time and more locations to bring dropoff sites closer to more people.

3.1.2. Downside is that people would still have to bag and haul their leaves.

3.2. Curbside pick-up could be eliminated or continued with this option

4. Alternative 3—Serve entire area with curbside pick-up

4.1. Curbside pick-up for all direct Clean Water Services customers would be difficult, as it is already a struggle to cover the current 14% of tax lots—would we bring on seasonal staff? contract out some/all of the work?—but it is one end of the spectrum to consider and would address equity issues.

4.2. Proactively reducing flooding-related costs would be a defensible reason for curbside pick-up in selected areas, but are people just seeing someone else getting something they aren't, and is that what prompted this evaluation of the leaf program?

4.2.1. Yes, every year we get calls from people along the boundaries of the pick-up areas asking to be included and/or saying that it is unfair. Even though the program is really aimed at reducing flooding-related costs in specific areas, it's hard to look at it without considering equity of service throughout the entire area.

4.3. In terms of equity, it could also be argued that some flood-prone areas are receiving less benefit from Clean Water Services because the (stormwater drain) pipes are too small (thus leaf pick-up is justified).

4.3.1. Interesting to think of the leaf pick-up program as actually being part of the storm system.

4.3.2. Our curbside pick-ups are in older areas, which have mature trees and probably also have an older, less effective storm sewer system.

4.3.2.1. Leaves also create a water quality issue for those older storm drains that go directly into streams, even though water quality may not be the driver of the leaf program in general.

4.4. Are any of those (current pick-up) areas uncurbed? It would make a difference to the program if there are more ditched areas than curbed areas.

4.4.1. The current program is intended for curbed areas, though there may be a few uncurbed spots in between.

4.5. That's a good question to consider—does "serve the entire area" mean the "entire curbed area" or literally "the entire area?" You would have to figure out whether you really need to pick up those leaves in the ditch.

4.6. Even if you did pick-up service for the entire area, you could first screen it for tree cover using LIDAR data, etc.

4.6.1. Yes, even if we decide to "serve the entire area," there will be some spots where pick-up would not be needed.

4.6.2. That almost sounds like Alt 1 (Status Quo), where you are already doing the areas that need it most.

4.7. LIDAR or other screening tool could be an aid (to maximize resources) in any of these alternatives.

4.8. An option under this alternative would be to offer opt-in service throughout the entire area, with a fee for those that choose it (set up leaf districts and determine fees, then each district could opt in or not).

4.8.1. It could become hard to track/administer a fee-based opt-in program. There will be people/groups in high-leaf areas that won't want to pay (so you'd still have flooding in some of those areas); you might have outside people bringing leaves into opt-in areas, etc.

4.9. If you live in an area where leaf collection is needed, you should pay for it. If you don't live in an area with leaf collection, why should you pay for it? What is the difficulty in just charging the people who benefit?

4.10. There may be a community safety aspect and/or a risk/liability aspect to consider with curbside pick-up. The City of Forest Grove is named as a defendant in a lawsuit stemming from an incident in which two children playing in streetside leaf piles were fatally injured when a vehicle drove through the piles; the City allegedly did not remove leaves according to the publicized/implied schedule.

4.11. It seems clear that the cost-benefit analysis of the leaf program is based on flooding and related costs. So the alternative is better stormwater management

systems—ultimately you would go around the county and modify all the storm drains.

4.11.1. Could Clean Water Services do an analysis of where flooding occurs, determine where too-small storm drains are contributing to that flooding, and then improve those drains?

5. Alternative 4—Work with County to turn leaf collection over to waste haulers

5.1. The idea behind this alternative is to use a program that is already set up; this option has been in place through the county but not well-publicized.

5.1.1. It seems like turning over leaf collection to the solid waste haulers would address a lot of the issues we've discussed.

5.1.2. Haulers would not come out with equipment; they would just bring out extra bins and they would charge an extra fee.

5.1.2.1. It is inexpensive ($2-$6/month) to get an extra bin and it can be ordered only for the month or two that it's needed, though it's hard to say whether all 10,000 customers would do so.

5.1.2.2. Could even consider using funds currently spent on leaf program to provide gradually-decreasing subsidy over a few years to help residents with the extra cost.

5.1.2.3. More bins means a lot more plastic.

5.1.2.4. Even several bins per household would not accommodate the volume of leaves in current pick-up areas.

5.1.3. No guarantee that people will actually pick up their leaves (and keep them from clogging storm drains).

5.2. In Tualatin, it is part of the agreement with their haulers to provide extra pickups during leaf season.

5.3. Information about all leaf disposal options should be part of public education efforts.

5.4. Don't lose sight of the public relations value—people take Clean Water Services for granted (flush and forget) and curbside pick-up lets residents see the blue trucks and staff working in their neighborhood.

5.4.1. The leaf dropoff days are also valuable for public relations; people who responded to surveys love the dropoff days and would like to see more of them. The food donation aspect of the dropoff days is popular and helps build public rapport. Survey respondents feel they are getting good value for their stormwater fee.

5.5. Was hauler pick-up an option when leaf program began?

5.5.1. Likely not; franchises or at least the yard debris component might not have been set up then.

6. Alternative 5—Work with nonprofit group(s) to serve a larger area

6.1. Scouts or other nonprofit group would be involved with expanded leaf dropoff days, not curbside pick-up.

6.2. Such groups usually ask for a donation—it's service, but also a fundraiser.

6.2.1. We could offer more leaf dropoff days/sites with nonprofit groups staffing them in return for a donation/stipend (and cost would probably still be less than current dropoff day costs).

6.3. We'd still have to dispose of the collected leaves (unlike leaves collected by haulers, which would be commercially composted).

6.3.1. If we are going to collect leaves, we would want to look at what we do with them—ways to offset costs, other disposal options, etc.

7. Alternative 6—Discontinue pick-up and dropoff components

7.1. This may not be the best solution, but it is one end of the options spectrum.

7.1.1. We would still have to meet the performance standard in the permit requirement by doing public education to let people know about options such as keeping grates raked clean, contacting county hauler for extra bin(s), being aware of nearby city dropoff dates, etc.

7.1.2. From a field staff standpoint, it would be the least taxing; though likely more taxing for the staff who answer the phone, but they will get calls no matter what changes are made.

7.2. What might happen if we just left the leaves alone?

7.2.1. Some residents will pick up their leaves; some will just not care.

7.2.2. Leaves left/placed in the street will eventually break down to a level that can be picked up through the monthly street sweeping program. Street sweeping equipment cannot handle a 2-3 foot high windrow of leaves but can pick it up once it gets down to 3-5 inches high. Typically the sweeper will pick up the outside edge of the pile with each monthly pass and we'd hope to get the last of the leaves by February.

7.2.3. If there is a lot of rain at the right time, some/most of the leaves might wash down into a catch basin and would be removed during routine maintenance.

7.3. Last month we saw some equipment on display—what is the cost of that? There would be a hit on that equipment if the leaf program were discontinued.

8. Other general comments

8.1. Does staff have a preference?

8.1.1. Probably depends on which staff you ask—field staff would probably appreciate being relieved of the curbside pick-up logistics, while the dropoff days are relatively easy to manage and have built up community goodwill as well. From a program management perspective, the curbside pick-up does

use up resources that could be applied to other work. I (Mr. Sandhu) like the dropoff days and the idea of working with haulers in some way.

8.2. How many cities provide curbside pick-up?
- 8.2.1. Only Hillsboro and Forest Grove; Sherwood does some (and is expanding as their trees mature); Beaverton, Cornelius, Tigard, and Tualatin do not, though Beaverton did in the past. Most cities do at least one dropoff day.
- 8.2.2. Why did Beaverton discontinue curbside pick-up?
  - 8.2.2.1. It became more difficult to do as the city expanded and they felt they could serve a wider area simultaneously and over time by having multiple days/sites. A big part of it was that the NACs (city-staffed neighborhood participation groups) preferred/requested the dropoff days; they also provide good visibility for NACs and the city.

8.3. The leaf program began in the mid-90s because of a problem (leaf-related flooding calls). Does that problem still exist; has there been improvement since the leaf program began?
- 8.3.1. We definitely get far fewer calls from those areas with curbside pick-up, though other things have probably also helped.
  - 8.3.1.1. We have done public outreach to let people know about keeping their storm drains clear.
  - 8.3.1.2. Storm drain maintenance is much improved from when the leaf program began in the 1990s.
  - 8.3.1.3. Overall storm system is much better now and there have been catch basin improvements, though there are still some areas where it hasn't changed.
- 8.3.2. If the program goes away, will those calls increase?
  - 8.3.2.1. That is hard to know.
  - 8.3.2.2. Is it possible to look at calls from areas that have flooding problems and have a good tree canopy, but don't have curbside pick-up, as a way to estimate how call volume might change if pick-up was eliminated in those areas that currently have it?
    - 8.3.2.2.1. Yes, we could develop some data to bring back to this group.
    - 8.3.2.2.2. We have also done some metrics to see how many callouts it would take to equal the $350K cost of the leaf program

8.4. Most neighborhood flooding is an inconvenience, though there may be occasional property damage.
- 8.4.1. Flooding may also have community costs, such as closed roads, police, county/city workers, so it is worth addressing.

8.5. Is there actually an equity issue here, and do we want to solve it by getting rid of the program or by charging the people who get the service?

- 8.5.1. You either have to expand it or eliminate it.

8.5.2. There is always the third option of determining where the drain system is of inadequate size (service equity issue) and where stormwater drains directly to streams (water quality issue), and focusing curbside pick-up in those areas. Continuing pick-up makes sense in those areas where there are actually problems.

8.5.3. $350,000 for the leaf program spread over the 10,000 households who have curbside pick-up is $35/year/customer. Distributed over all customers it would be about $5/year or forty-two cents a month. How is that an equity issue?

8.5.3.1. People (may) feel that they are paying for something they are not benefitting from.

8.5.3.1.1. But you do get something for it—you get better water quality throughout the District.

8.5.4. From my observations/conversations, it's not the money involved, it's more the idea that someone is getting that convenience/service and someone else is not.

8.5.5. Be careful about striving for "equity"—you could start hearing from people who think they shouldn't have to pay for electricity to run a pump station that isn't near them, or their fees should be lower than the person who is closer to more catch basins, etc.

8.6. When it began, the program was focused on leaves from street trees but it has turned into a landscape service—people are bringing out leaves from front and back yards, their friends are bringing leaves over, etc. There has not been clear messaging about the actual rationale/purpose.

8.7. Does Clean Water Services deal with flooding in other ways throughout the District?

8.7.1. Yes, there are sometimes call-outs for overflowing catch basins; another typical flooding call might be for a clogged ditch inlet or where an open channel comes into a ditch, especially early in the fall when there are lots of sticks and leaves.

8.7.2. And is that cost distributed among all ratepayers?

8.7.2.1. Yes, all those types of repairs are part of the SWM fee. A similar example is street sweeping—it's only done on curbed streets but the cost is distributed among all ratepayers. The rationale is that everyone benefits from improved water quality.

8.7.3. That makes it more difficult to see leaf collection costs as an equity issue.

8.7.4. It would be interesting to see costs of those other types of flood-related work and compare to cost of leaf program.