



4646 Dakota St. SE
Prior Lake, MN 55372

A message from our Mayor:

Examining Refuse Collection Options

The fundamental purpose of government is to protect public safety and public health. At the municipal level, public safety includes services like police, fire, ambulance and building inspection. Public health examples include water supply, water storage, sewer, and refuse collection. Our 2030 Vision and Strategic Plan directs your City Council to consider ways to conserve fuel, reduce noise, promote aesthetics, preserve our natural environment, protect public investment and minimize hazards to the public. To that end, your City Council has been seeking information about refuse collection in general.

Refuse (with the possible exception of recycling) is collected today much the same as when we were kids five decades ago, and our City was one square mile with a population of less than 1,000 people. Prior Lake is now 18.3 square miles with a population nearing 25,000. It is prudent for the Council to ask “are we collecting refuse in the best way?” Are there changes that could be made to benefit haulers and residents? Can we better protect our environment, roadways and pedestrian safety?

I have heard from some residents – and read in the Prior Lake American – that the City Council has a specific proposal to change our refuse collection system. That is an incorrect statement. At this time, the City Council has only directed and received a report from City staff outlining ways other cities and state statute provide for refuse collection, essentially outlining the City’s options and identifying the process steps and timeline involved in making changes, if any. Going forward, our aim is to examine the following areas to see if improvements can be made:

Safety – There are many areas in Prior Lake where the streets are narrow, where our kids may play in the cul-de-sac, or run house-to-house in their neighborhood. Is there a way to minimize the risk associated with the number of times garbage trucks travel through one neighborhood?

Fuel Consumption – Does the current system provide for excessive waste of fuel (a non-renewable resource) and therefore increased costs to the haulers and their customers? Is there a way haulers can better manage collection, conserve fuel and achieve improved efficiencies to contain their costs? Can containing costs equate to more competitive fees for refuse service?

Environment – Can steps be taken to reduce impacts to the atmosphere and the air we breathe that is generated by trucks idling and longer engine operation?

Roads – Could amending our refuse hauling system actually extend the average life span of our roads beyond the current 30 years to save us all money and conserve a petroleum based product (bituminous or blacktop)?

Vehicle Noise – Can we minimize the hours that large garbage vehicles are in neighborhoods for the benefit of property owners?

Aesthetics – Should there be recycling and garbage containers dotting City streets every day of the week?

I believe these are prudent questions. Rather than pretend the City Council or staff are the experts, we have directed that the refuse haulers themselves help the City staff to address these

questions. The refuse haulers have been very receptive to these discussions; after all, they share many of our conservation, environmental, safety and cost concerns.

Meetings are scheduled beginning at the end of May to initiate this discussion. We look forward to the meetings as an opportunity to make a good system even better. If no changes are recommended, we will at the very least be able to say that we have done the prudent thing and asked the right questions.

There are two foregone conclusions you can make right now:

1. The City does not want to become your refuse hauler; and

2. The City does not desire to eliminate consumer choice or hauler competition.

I expect the staff to provide a status report of their discussions with the haulers in 90 days. By working together, we believe it is possible to make enhancements to our refuse collection system that will be mutually beneficial to the City, its residents, and the haulers, while preserving all those things which we appreciate about the current system.

Mayor Jack Haugen