

## Whittier City Council votes to privatize trash collection

By Mike Sprague , Whittier Daily News

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WHITTIER >> The City Council voted 3-1 Tuesday to privatize trash collection on the west side of the city and will choose a company to pick up waste throughout the entire community.

Consolidated Disposal Services and Waste Management now collect trash on the east side of the city as part of agreements that will expire on June 30, 2016.

The council's decision means that one company will be selected to pick up trash in the entire city as part of a franchise Whittier will award.

"We're too small," Councilman Bob Henderson said of the city's existing operation.

"We can't even do the whole city and we have two cans picked up," Henderson said, referring to recycling and green waste cans the city contracts with Consolidated to pick up. "We don't have the economies of scale. Our expenses are high. We're hopeful we can do better for the city of Whittier."

Public Works Director David Pelsler said private firms have advantages over Whittier because the city doesn't have its own recycling facilities and the city yard barely has enough space for its existing trucks, Pelsler said.

In addition, the city will get paid – an amount still unknown – for selling its operation, Pelsler said. Rates also are likely to decrease, he predicted.

Council members said they will ensure whichever company is chosen will give jobs to existing employees.

The company, which is selected will be required to offer jobs, for at least a year, to the 12 city employees affected, Pelsler said. The only condition would be to pass a pre-employment medical exam.

Steve Gardner, president of the Whittier City Employees Association, said he's disappointed with the council vote.

"The 12 employees are dedicated, want to continue working with the city and not necessarily give up their careers," Gardner said.

"I'm obviously concerned for the citizens," he said. "Their level of service may not be the same they get with city employees." Councilman Owen Newcomer opposed the plan. Councilman Joe Vinatieri was absent.

"I'm opposed to privatizing because I don't see a long-term benefit," Newcomer said. "They think they can get money up front but it will be paid back by the rate payers over the long-term."

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Councilwoman Cathy Warner said she's happy the employees have been offered jobs and likes the idea of selling off the collection as a franchise.

"I want to see income to the city," Warner said.



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