

Whittier City Council contracts for extra help for trash collection

By Mike Sprague , Whittier Daily News

WhittierDailyNews.com

WHITTIER >> Citing concerns about increasing use of sick leave and potential attrition among its solid waste employees with the expected privatization of trash collection, the city has contracted with Republic Services to provide trash pick up when needed.

The City Council earlier this week approved the contract that will pay Republic \$1,144 for each residential route — between 800 to 1,000 customers — completed. A caps of \$30,000 also was set.

Republic was chosen because it already picks up the blue and green recycling bins for the city and thus knows the territory, said Public Works Director David Pelser.

“This is being prudent to have a plan in place should we need it,” said Pelser, referring to the possibility of lacking drivers to collect trash.

“It’s fairly common for these kinds of issues to come up when people are about to lose their jobs,” Pelser said. “We want to have an agreement in place to take care of our customers.”

The council voted in May to privatize trash collection for the western half of the city it now services and choose a company to pick up trash throughout the city.

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

A trash company to serve the entire city is expected to be selected by next fall, Pelser said.

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

So far the increase in sick leave has been moderate and there have been no problems, but there are other concerns, he said.

Pelser said it’s possible some employees will leave the city for other jobs and it will be difficult to hire replacements for the short term.

Councilman Joe Vinatieri said he understands why employees might be take time off.

“They’re looking for jobs and trying to make sure they come out of the situation OK,” he said. “From a cost standpoint, it’s a relatively limited amount of money.”

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