City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 20, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 93: ELECTION SIGN RECYCLING COST (COUNCILMAN GAINES' REQUEST)

In November 2004, Councilman Gaines asked if the City had considered implementing an election sign recycling program similar to one in Denver, Colorado. T&ES responded that due to timing, the issue would be addressed for the 2005 elections. This is in response to Councilman Gaines' request for a FY 2006 budget memorandum on the cost of implementing such a program.

T&ES estimates the cost would be between $1,000 and $1,500 per collection event. Most of the cost would be due to staff overtime and event promotion.

Logistically, the program would entail opening a drop-off center for several hours on a Saturday to receive used election signs. Staff, and possibly volunteers, would be on-hand to receive the signs and separate them from their stakes. The cost estimate assumes 1,000 signs would be collected during a three hour drop-off event. Only signs made strictly from paper would be recycled. Those made from corrugated plastic or vinyl would be directed to the trash due to lack of a viable outlet for such a small amount of material. The stakes to which the signs are attached would also end up in the trash. Trucks would be on-hand to dispose of the non-recyclable material, and there would be a minor cost of its disposal. Since the event would be "special" and has never been attempted by the City, newspaper ads would be purchased to promote the event.

Reuse and waste reduction may be the best approach to reduce post-election waste. Candidate collection of signs for future use would demonstrate environmental responsibility. Also, ensuring that the signs are made from paper, which can be recycled both curbside and at the City drop-offs, would also contribute to the ease of recycling without a special collection event.

Attached are copies of Councilman Gaines' November 2004 request and the T&ES response.

Attachment

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

(VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL)

TO: PHILLIP G. SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER

CC: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL, RICH J. BAIER, DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIROMENTAL SERVICES

FROM: LUDWIG P. GAINES, MEMBER OF COUNCIL

DATE: NOVEMBER 8, 2004, 2004

RE: RECYCLING ELECTION YARD SIGNS

Has the City of Alexandria considered a formal recycling effort for election yard signs?

Thousands upon thousands of election yard signs spring up annually throughout Alexandria, yet I am unaware of any targeted election sign recycling effort. The elections may be over, but signs remain in bunches all over the city – not necessarily on public rights of way with the mandated removal requirement, but certainly in garages, homes and the offices of political parties. This amounts to a lot of material that more often than not finds its way into the regular trash or collects dust because people simply don't know what to do with the signs once an election is over. Why not explore a more environmentally friendly approach and recycle the signs?

Towards this end, I request city staff examine the possibility of recycling election yard signs. One approach is to offer a free one-day collection and recycling event in the coming weeks. A drop-off site could be designated and residents, political parties and any others in the city with signs could be encouraged to participate. The City of Denver, Colorado is sponsoring such a program on November 20th http://www.denvergov.org/newsarticle.asp?cview+2&id+7948).

November 15th is America Recycles Day, and what better way to show patriotism and support for the environment than by recycling our election signs. I look forward to your response.

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: NOVEMBER 30, 2004

TO: COUNCILMAN LUDWIG P. GAINES

THROUGH: ROSE WILLIAMS BOYD, DIRECTOR OF CITIZEN ASSISTANCE

FROM: RICHARD J. BAIER, P.E., DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: RECYCLING ELECTION YARD SIGNS (COUNCIL REQUEST #04-147G)

This is in response to your request for staff comment regarding consideration of a formal recycling effort for election yard signs.

Due to timing, next year would be better to address the issue of a collection for the election signs. This would provide more time to look into associated costs, efficient set-up, and better promotion. The City of Denver information is helpful.

There is a need for special collections in other areas as well. Based on feedback from residents, while the Monday collection of household hazardous waste and electronic materials is well utilized, there is a demand for occasional weekend collections. Implementation of a special collection for household hazardous waste, electronic materials, and election signs is being considered for the fall 2005.

cc: The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council
Philip Sunderland, City Manager
Doug McCobb, Deputy Director, Maintenance Operations, T&ES
Alton Weaver, Division Chief, Solid Waste, T&ES