



# Agenda Report

**TO:** CCCSWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
**FROM:** PAUL MORSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
**DATE:** OCTOBER 21, 2009

**SUBJECT:** NOTIFICATION FROM WASTE MANAGEMENT REGARDING RELOCATION OF THEIR CALL CENTER TO THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

## SUMMARY

Waste Management has notified the Authority (see attachment A) of their intention to move their call center to the State of Washington. This proposed move raises serious questions regarding compliance with the current Franchise Contract and with acceptable customer service standards.

## RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Receive comments from Waste Management representatives and provide direction to Staff.

## DISCUSSION

Over the past months complaints have been received in the CCCSWA office regarding service issues with our recycling service provider, Waste Management. These complaints have largely been from customers who felt they were treated poorly by the employees with whom they contacted with their service issues, unfamiliarity with the franchise agreement which resulted in a customer not getting the service to which they were entitled and long waits on hold until they could speak to a customer service representative. Indeed, just in the past two weeks two more complaints were received that involved not cleaning-up a small oil spill and not servicing carts that were put out for collection after the customers contacted the call center.

In the past, complaints were largely rare and appropriately handled. The complaints referenced in this report happened shortly after a corporate reorganization that deleted management staff at the local office (by moving them from our service area to serve a larger Bay Area sector) and moved the call center from our service area to Oakland. In discussions with Waste Management representatives, we were told that while the call center was moved, the same personnel that had been located within our service area, and familiar with Authority services, would be relocated to the Oakland center. Moreover, intensive training would be provided to other employees at the call center to insure that familiarity with our franchise agreement would be gained so that in the future accurate information on services to which customers were entitled would be disseminated to CCCSWA customers who had complaints or inquiries.

Areas of concern surfaced upon receipt of the letter announcing the December move of the call center to the State of Washington:

- Since the move of the call center to Oakland caused both unfamiliarity with services to which our customers were entitled and a feeling from those who contacted the representatives that they were not treated in a polite manner, Staff is concerned that the center's move to a different state, where the representatives will have no familiarity with our unique services, will cause even more complaints and ill feelings of customers with enquiries and/or service issues. For example, one can only imagine, if a service question or request was called in, how the new Washington State employee (who has no experience with the Authority's franchise) could research the issue/request quickly in a franchise document that measures one and a quarter inches thick.
- The current franchise agreement between the parties specifies that a local office shall be maintained with a qualified company representative on site to communicate with the public (see attachment B). The franchise does not, however, state that the call center itself must be local but clearly the spirit and intention is to insure that representatives should be at the local office and be qualified to respond to the public. Moving those who are qualified to deal with the public two States away is not local. How does a customer call center in the State of Washington meet the franchise requirement for local response to inquiries and complaints? Among the personnel required in the franchise agreement (see attachment C) are two customer service representatives and a customer service supervisor dedicated to the CCCSWA. It is difficult to imagine how an out-of-state facility could meet the requirements of the agreement.
- Performance requirements for Waste Management's telephone service are spelled out (see attachment B) and outline standards. A call center that will handle a multi-state area will certainly be busier than the center that handled only CCCSWA calls. How will the standards outlined in our agreement be maintained in the busiest times of high volume calls by a unit with a very large geographic area to service?
- The agreement requires written approval for any reduction in personnel (see attachment D). It appears that this proposed move on Waste Management's part is not within the spirit of the franchise.

The foregoing are questions that immediately come to mind; there are no doubt more questions that could be raised. I have asked Waste Management representatives to appear before the Board to answer the foregoing questions and any others the Board may have.

#### ATTACHMENTS

- A. Letter Received from WM informing us of this change
- B. Franchise Agreement, Section 5.2 Customer Service
- C. Labor Requirements
- D. Franchise Agreement, Section 4.4 Operations, F1—Reduction in Personnel