



# Agenda Report

**TO:** CCCSWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
**FROM:** PAUL MORSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
KENT ALM, CCCSWA COUNSEL  
**DATE:** DECEMBER 1, 2009

**SUBJECT: CUSTOMER SERVICE ISSUES WITH WASTE MANAGEMENT**

## SUMMARY

Given recent complaints regarding customer service and response that have surfaced with Waste management, a proposed move of the firm's local call center to the State of Washington has been reviewed by staff. Staff's proposed response to this move is set forth in this staff report.

## RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. No specific action is recommended; discussion and direction from the Board, if any, is requested.

## DISCUSSION

Recently, over the past several months, customers have expressed displeasure with the way in which they were handled by Waste Management (WM) employees when making complaints and requests for information or service; these complaints, in some cases, have been brought to the Board level. Over the past years complaints of this nature have been so rare as to be non-existent. The recent spate of dissatisfaction coincides with changes locally in the way WM has traditionally been staffed and organized. These changes include the removal of executive-level staff from the local (Walnut Creek) office and the emplacement of this level of staffing at a larger San Francisco Bay Area territory which minimizes the personal attention that this level of staffing traditionally devoted to our service area. Additionally, the call center which responds to customer calls, for years located at the local office, has been moved to the Oakland regional office where all calls from the entire bay area region are answered.

In a September 30, 2009 letter from WM, the Authority was informed that effective December 1, 2009, the call center will be moved again to Oak Harbor, Washington where customer calls are to be handled from a multi-state area. Given the downturn in customer service experienced with the out-of-county move of the call center, Authority staff feared that the out-of-state move would further erode customer service. This fear was reinforced when, following receipt of the subject letter and prior to the October Board meeting, two more complaints were raised to our office on matters that should have been handled expeditiously and not require CCCSWA intervention. As a result of the recent downturn in dealing with customer complaints and the fear

that the call center move would further erode the high level of customer service that our customers have come to expect, WM representatives were invited to attend the October Board meeting and address the issues.

Mr. Grant Hankins, Director of Operations, California Bay Market Area, spoke to the Board at the October 29<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, assuring the Board that customer service would not only be maintained but be enhanced with the center's move to Oak Harbor, Washington. Mr. Hankins spoke of the merits of a professional call center operation and cited the move to digitize the current franchise agreement as a means for call center personnel to quickly access information needed to respond to customers. He also stated that the local office would still be available for customer service activities. The Board asked staff to follow-up on this matter.

Your Counsel and Executive Director met with Mr. Hankins and discussed this matter. Also, WM arranged for staff to meet with the manager of the Oak Harbor Call Center for discussions to better understand this impending change. After these discussions, staff feels that while the spirit of the franchise document requiring local office customer service may be questionable with the center's move, the move alone would not be a flagrant violation of the franchise agreement. The real issue to be determined is maintaining the expected level of customer service. Accordingly, staff has concluded that testing the new system is the next appropriate step. Pending any direction from the Board to the contrary, it is our intention to publicize through bill inserts, web sites, newsletters, etc. this customer service move and provide those customers who may be dissatisfied with Oak Harbor responses with the alternative of contacting the local office. Moreover we will ask customers to share with us their experience and tell us if they received the service they expect. After a period of time, if customer service has been found to decline, we will consider actions for implementing franchise provisions dealing with franchise violations. The public information to alert our customers will be emplaced during the month of December.