

Report of City Council Meeting on Thursday March 22nd

This special meeting was a workshop requested by the City Manager to allow the council to give direction to city staff on how to proceed with issues related to solid waste disposal.

It was mentioned that Edgewater has one of the highest rates for garbage pickup in Volusia County, but this is partially due to the high level of service the city provides. Edgewater was one of the first cities in Volusia county to complete clean up from recent hurricanes and this was attributed to the dedication of the city workers.

The options proposed for the City Council to consider were:

1. Do nothing – continue with 9% rate increases every year. The current rate of \$353 per year will increase to \$498 per year by 2022.
2. Consider privatizing garbage pickup as many Volusia County cities do
3. Authorize a study to be done by outside consultants to see if the current set up of using city workers can be done in a more cost-effective manner.

The meeting began with a staff presentation which highlighted the major costs associated with city-owned garbage pickup. In addition to personnel costs, increasing health care costs and costs of owning & operating 9 pickup trucks, Edgewater is facing the need to replace the garbage transfer station at a cost of \$3.6 million. One of the issues to be studied is whether a transfer station is necessary.

Prior to opening the meeting for citizen comments, all of the council members present commented on the excellent service our garbagemen provide, going above and beyond their responsibility. The mayor offered his opinion that often privatizing garbage pickup will save cities lots of money in the first few years, but gradually the costs rise until the city is back where they were before they privatized and laid off city workers.

More than half of the meeting time was taken up by citizen comments. A number of city workers were present and talked about their years of devotion to the city. All of the other citizens agreed that the service they received for garbage pickup was excellent. One citizen told of the time she was recovering from cancer treatment and was unable to get her garbage cans out to the street. The garbage men came to her back door to pick up the trash and returned the can to her house.

At the conclusion of the citizen comments, the City Council requested that the City Manager prepare a formal contract for consultant services to be voted on at the April meeting, to look for ways to make the present workers more efficient.