

**SPECIAL WORKSESSION OF THE ANOKA CITY COUNCIL
ANOKA CITY HALL
CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION ROOM
JANUARY 5, 2026**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Skogquist called the worksession meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present at roll call: Mayor Skogquist, Councilmembers Campbell, Rostad, Scott, and Weaver.

Staff present: City Manager Greg Lee; Police Chief Andy Youngquist, Ben Nelson, Assistant City Engineer, Electric Utility Director Del Vancura; and City Attorney Scott Baumgartner.

Absent: None.

3. COUNCIL BUSINESS and/or DISCUSSION ITEMS

**3.1 Discussion: Organized Solid Waste Collection and Recycling System.
Meet and Confer Meeting with Currently Licensed Collectors.**

Mayor Skogquist clarified this worksession was intended to serve as a meet and confer with licensed haulers, adding public input would be taken during the regular meeting later this evening.

Councilmember Weaver suggested moving that item forward in the regular meeting agenda rather than having residents wait until the end to comment.

City Attorney Scott Baumgartner shared a background report stating that on December 15, 2025, the City Council held a special worksession to meet with the current licensed haulers. The City Council called for another special worksession with the haulers to be held on January 5, 2026. This worksession is a meet and confer meeting with the current licensed haulers to discuss topics of waste collection issues, which may include things such as road deterioration, public safety, pricing mechanisms, and contractual considerations. It was noted that staff emailed notice of this special worksession to the haulers on December 16, and a public notice was also published in the *Anoka Union*. Mr. Baumgartner explained the meeting process that was based on statute to discuss allowed topics, adding that one of the items not addressed at the last worksession included negotiation processes in a contractual agreement. He suggested the Council and haulers continue the topics as part of an exclusive negotiation that included contractual topics, not in detail, but in general.

Mayor Skogquist noted this meeting was part of a process and clarified the Council has not voted to forgo any public vote and put into place organized hauling into place. Mr. Baumgartner confirmed that no changes can be implemented unless approved by the voters in an upcoming general election.

Mayor Skogquist asked the haulers present to introduce themselves. Matt Herman, Curbside Waste, Dave Wiggins, Ace Solid Waste, Chris DeLaForest, Ace Solid Waste, Bev Mathiasen, Republic Services, Marcus Cook, Ace Solid Waste, and Jeff Newsom, Walters Recycling, introduced themselves to the audience.

City Manager Greg Lee shared comments on road deterioration impacts as part of garbage hauling, then spoke about a study conducted by MnDOT in 2014 and how the weight of garbage trucks equates to 1,279 standard vehicles.

Mayor Skogquist shared a photo of State Avenue during reconstruction that shows more wear and tear on one side of the road than the other, where garbage cans were placed, and spoke about the deterioration of that side that shouldn't have occurred. He said it is important to identify ways we can extend road life and identify revenue sources to pay for them.

Councilmember Weaver asked if State Avenue was one of the roads where we used inferior lift materials, which resulted in having to be replaced. Assistant City Engineer Ben Nelson confirmed that State Street materials had to be replaced.

Mr. Lee noted that sealcoat has no structural integrity for a road and just keeps water from getting into the road. Councilmember Weaver disagreed, saying the deterioration can't be blamed on heavy wear and tear.

Mayor Skogquist disagreed, stating that if that was the case, the other side of the road would have been impacted as well.

Mr. DeLaForest said the haulers have studies which show wear and tear is due to climate and inferior products, adding in 2015 this City was not able to demonstrate in a meaningful way any reduction in road impacts, and that no new information has been offered to state otherwise.

Councilmember Scott said if that was the case, then why are road impacts included in the statute if it was impossible to prove? Mr. DeLaForest said it was simply because no proof exists, stating that in cities with government-run hauling, the roads are the same, adding that while there may be a reduction, it is not meaningful enough for citizens to give up their right to choose their hauler. Mark Cooksey, Ace Solid waste, asked if there was a photo of State Avenue before the repair as he felt the damage was due to snow plows instead. Mr. Lee, if

plows had done the damage, it would have been scraped off and been on both sides of the street.

Councilmember Rostad said it stands to reason the damage is due to sheer weight.

Mr. Wiggins shared comments about a study of garbage trucks going into a landfill that didn't have a scale, so they were always overweight, and how the formula needs to have more information. He said they don't load trucks like that now and that they are rarely over 65,000 pounds and have additional axles to spread out that weight. He shared his work with a tire vendor, who proved that school buses put more weight per square inch than their trucks.

Councilmember Rostad disagreed that a bus has more weight than other buses. Mr. Wiggins explained that the tires on their trucks are wider and have more axles, which distributes the weight better.

Councilmember Rostad disagreed because otherwise the State wouldn't have spring weight limits in place. Mr. Wiggins agreed that weight matters, but said their trucks have the same impact as school buses.

Mr. Lee noted garbage trucks are exempt from spring axle weight limits and noted Mr. DeLaForest wasn't in the legislature during 2013 when passed.

Mr. DeLaForest said if weight is a topic in statute, we owe that topic a conversation, but if we accept your logic that our trucks do more damage, the same logic would apply to a Honda Civic and a Chevy Suburban. He said we've shown that limiting heavy traffic doesn't change the lifespan of a road, as mill and overlay and maintenance will be the same, but taking away choice and controlling an industry does impact residents. He noted all haulers agreed to comply with spring axle weight reduction already, and that some haulers have 100 stops and will be fully loaded at least half the time, so if implemented, it will be heavier than today.

Mr. Herman, Curbside Waste, said weight restrictions are common sense but have nothing to do with road damage but the safety of the community. Mayor Skogquist disagreed, stating there are many townships where haulers are over capacity against their roads being overbuilt. He said it was difficult to assign an exact amount, but empirically, the law is different, and MnDOT is right, and this Council was charged with finding money to replace impacted roads.

Mr. Herman, Curbside Waste, said all haulers have already agreed to follow spring road restrictions if required as part of licensing.

Councilmember Campbell asked if Coon Rapids had passed an ordinance for open hauling that included axle weight. Mr. Wiggins said Coon Rapids didn't

have any dollar savings identified, so that portion of the ordinance was not included.

Councilmember Rostad argued residents would save money due to price negotiations and that she has yet to speak with anyone about pricing, which would result in significant savings of 20% if we went with the City's negotiated rate. Mr. Lee shared that the rate includes a 3% escalator clause.

Mr. Herman, Curbside Waste, explained haulers can't discuss pricing as it was illegal and that they are bound by federal law and can't be transparent about their pricing.

Mayor Skogquist said price discussions are allowed in certain cases if required by licensing, whether through us doing it or negotiating as a consortium. He said it is our job to ensure infrastructure is being used consistently and fairly, and that we wouldn't allow this for a utility company, so why allow it for garbage haulers?

Mr. Herman, Curbside Waste, said most standards are for the industry, similar to many other services, to provide an equitable open market system and if the customer doesn't like it they shop, adding customers could all want something different.

Mr. DeLaForest said price is not always the most important factor as customer loyalty or local business may be more important. He said there are many times government pricing is lost and gets mixed into the general fund, and is added to the property tax instead.

Councilmember Scott likened this to Amazon and other delivery services charging different delivery fees for the same neighborhood, adding that the City would be managing pricing, just as with recycling.

Mr. Lee explained how organized recycling has been a great success and thanked Ace Solid Waste for their great pricing, adding that this was done through a competitive bidding process for the last 40 years.

Mr. Wiggins said there are still administrative costs the City has to incur, and that staff time is not reflected in those rates, and that the scope of garbage hauling is much larger than recycling. He said administrative costs and calls will greatly increase, then spoke about the City's recent levy increase, which will only be higher if passed, and if done, you cannot return to the old method. He said it is all a matter of trust, which was why this was an emotional topic, as the government is taking over something residents do. He likened it to reserving hotel rooms and the many different pricing options available for the same room, and that once taken away, it will be gone forever.

Mayor Skogquist said he understood Mr. Wiggins' comments and that he didn't anticipate changing anyone's opinion, but said the recycling costs have been low for many years and are working well.

Mr. Herman, Curbside Waste said recycling was implemented through the government from the beginning and was rolled out that way and that garbage hauling is different. He said that's why the statute was passed, so cities couldn't just put companies out of business without due process, noting this keeps competition alive.

Mr. Lee explained how recycling was initiated by the hauler and shared the history of how Anoka had a single hauler for 150 years, but in 1991 was opened up. He said we only have four haulers now, but you can still choose your hauler, which helps protect the roadways.

Mayor Skogquist said he understood the logic but said this is not an open system as it is limited to the four haulers, adding that eventually it will become smaller, similar to Peterson Bros. being absorbed by Republic.

Mr. Wiggins said, if you get down to two haulers, you can open it up to a third, so there will always be three haulers.

Councilmember Scott said Council can't make that choice as it is in the Charter for a citizen vote.

Mayor Skogquist said there is nothing new on the topic of public safety, so he moved to contractual considerations related to antitrust issues and said he was curious about how this would happen. Mr. Baumgartner said he was not clear on the supervision language in Statute, but he interpreted it as the City being collaborative, working with the haulers to ensure it happens, and notifying all the haulers so everyone has a seat at the table, but added that he said his interpretation was really a guess. He said he thought it was a misuse, actually, as we can't tell the haulers what to do, and it was actually contradictory.

Mr. Herman, Curbside Waste said this is only oversight of the anti-trust laws and explained haulers were not allowed to discuss price outside of these parameters which cities have to supervise. He noted they don't have a legal team as they are a small company that just wants to pick up garbage, but will now be forced to spend money on this topic. He said this was frustrating since the residents already said no, adding that the resulting increased costs will be passed on to the customer eventually.

Mr. Baumgartner said the City can't supervise business operations, which is why he felt the statute wasn't clear. Mr. DeLaForest said without that safe harbor nothing could happen, adding they can't be in the same room to discuss pricing and that this is a lynchpin and burden of the supervisor and critically important.

He said there could be legal exposure for both the City and haulers, and that the Department of Justice was focusing on this topic and how it was becoming more important.

Mr. Baumgartner responded that this was why supervision was built into the statute, but said outside the statute, the term supervision was meaningless. Mr. Newman, Walters Recycling said they were a small local hauler and said if a resident doesn't select Walter's that's fine as it was a customer choice but the government shouldn't be the one to decide, adding they currently support Hope 4 Youth and Stepping Stones. He shared concerns with anti-trust violations and was not sure what had changed in the 13 months since the voters spoke on this topic, and asked why this was being brought up again now.

Councilmember Weaver noted the public will be allowed to speak on this topic at the regular Council meeting.

Mayor Skogquist said the item would be moved forward for public input with parameters in place for speaking.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Scott, seconded by Councilmember Campbell, to adjourn the Worksession at 6:59 p.m.

Motion carried.

Submitted by: Cathy Sorensen, *TimeSaver Off-Site Secretarial, Inc.*

Approval Attestation:

Amy T. Oehlers, City Clerk