

8. Communication received from Russ Boersma, General Manager of Arrowaste, expressing concerns regarding the proposal to implement a single-hauler refuse system in Grand Rapids



CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

DATE: June 10, 2025

TO: Mark Washington, City Manager

COMMITTEE: City Commission Meeting
LIAISON: N/A

FROM: Joel H. Hondorp, City Clerk
City Clerk's Office

SUBJECT: Communication received from Russ Boersma, General Manager of Arrowaste, expressing concerns regarding the proposal to implement a single-hauler refuse system in Grand Rapids

From: Russ Boersma

Sent: Friday, May 30, 2025 2:51 PM

To: Mayor <mayor@grand-rapids.mi.us>; City Manager <manager@grand-rapids.mi.us>; Comptroller <comptroller@grand-rapids.mi.us>; Belchak, AliciaMarie <abelchak@grand-rapids.mi.us>; Robbins, Drew <d Robbins@grand-rapids.mi.us>; Ysasi, Milinda <mysasi@grand-rapids.mi.us>; Knight, Lisa <lknight@grand-rapids.mi.us>; Kilgore, Marshall <mkilgore@grand-rapids.mi.us>; Perdue, Kelsey <kperdue@grand-rapids.mi.us>

Subject: Proposed Single Hauler System

Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed Single-Hauler System in Grand Rapids

Dear Mayor, Commissioners, and City Manager,

I'm writing today to express concerns about the proposal to implement a single-hauler refuse system in Grand Rapids, limiting residential service to only the City's refuse program.

Arrowwaste is a local, family-owned company based in Jenison. We've been proudly serving West Michigan since 2000, starting in Zeeland. Our service area now stretches from Cedar Springs to Gun Lake and west to the Lakeshore. We operate on a subscription-based model, giving residents the freedom to choose a provider based on service quality, price, and the value of supporting a local business. Despite our growth, we remain committed to delivering outstanding customer service and investing in modern equipment to ensure safety, efficiency, and cost control.

Many Grand Rapids residents choose Arrowwaste because of our flexible, reliable weekly service. While we understand the City's Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) system works well for some—particularly those who only need biweekly pickup—others prefer or require more frequent service, often at a lower cost. Additionally, we offer walk-up and drive-up service options that the City does not currently provide unless a resident has a documented health condition. We offer these services to any customer for a reasonable fee based on their preferences.

We also work with several property management companies that own multiple properties both inside and outside of Grand Rapids. These clients value the convenience of having one point of contact, one bill, and monthly pricing. A mandatory PAYT system would require them to manage multiple accounts across various providers, adding complexity and cost.

While we acknowledge that a PAYT program may offer certain benefits, we question the specific claims made by City staff regarding reduced emissions and road wear. These assertions appear to be anecdotal, and it's unclear how the proposed system would generate savings—especially if the City must purchase additional refuse trucks to accommodate the expanded service area. Replacing private haulers with City-operated trucks would not necessarily reduce overall emissions or wear; it would simply shift the source. Additionally, Michigan's freeze-thaw climate is a primary contributor to road deterioration, regardless of how many haulers are operating. If reducing wear and tear on roads is a central goal, we encourage the City to also consider the substantial daily presence of delivery trucks from Amazon, FedEx, UPS, and DHL. By contrast, our trucks typically operate below full capacity, service a street only once per week, and often run underweight due to the wide spacing of our stops.

We appreciate this opportunity to engage with the City Commission, and we also wanted our customers to be aware of this discussion. We have mailed a letter to our customers about the City's public engagement session and encouraged them to complete your survey (please see the attached letter).

Thank you for taking the time to consider our perspective. I would be happy to discuss this proposal further and am available to meet at your convenience or speak by phone. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly at my desk line.

Sincerely,



Russ Boersma
General Manager
Arrowwaste Inc.

Office: 616-748-1955

Desk: 616-310-8352

Your Local Waste & Recycle Service for 25 years!

Your Choice Matters, Help Us Keep Serving You

Dear City of Grand Rapids Customer,

We want to thank you for choosing Arrowwaste as your waste removal provider. It's our pleasure to serve you and your community with reliable, affordable, and locally owned service.

We're writing to inform you of an important development that could impact your ability to choose the trash hauler that best fits your needs.

The City of Grand Rapids is currently considering a move to a single-hauler system for residential waste collection. This means that instead of you being able to choose the company you trust—like ours—the city would service all residents with their "Pay as You Throw" program. If this plan moves forward, companies like ours would no longer be allowed to serve your neighborhood, you will have no choice but to use the city for your service.

We believe you should have the right to choose who picks up your trash, especially when it comes to quality of service, cost, and customer care. We've worked hard to earn your trust and business, and we don't want to lose the opportunity to serve you.

Here's how you can help:

The city has a community survey, and they are looking for your feedback. Scan the QR Code at the bottom of the letter to participate. You can also visit publicinput.com/h06236 or attend a City Commission on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of every month to let them know your thoughts.

We'll keep you informed about upcoming meetings or decisions, but in the meantime, feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns. You can also contact your city commissioner to share your thoughts. grandrapidsmi.gov/government/elected-officials

Thank you again for being a valued part of the Arrowwaste family. We're committed to continuing the great service you've come to expect—now and in the future.

With appreciation,

Arrowwaste

