



(<https://twitter.com/austinmonitor>)



(<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Austin-Monitor/705048206171979>)



BETA



Monday, October 2, 2017 by Jo Clifton (<https://www.austinmonitor.com/stories/author/jo-clifton/>)

 CITY HALL ([HTTPS://WWW.AUSTINMONITOR.COM/STORIES/CATEGORY/AUSTIN/CITY-HALL/](https://www.austinmonitor.com/stories/category/austin/city-hall/))

Council puts off ethics rules vote

City Council postponed a vote on the proposed new ethics ordinance Thursday, raising questions about whether a new request for proposal for handling city biosolids might become the subject of lobbying.

That was certainly not Council's intent, according to Council Member Leslie Pool. Pool, chief sponsor of the new ethics ordinance, asked her colleagues to postpone the matter for three weeks, so it will now appear on the Oct. 19 agenda. The city suspended its ethics ordinance as to matters surrounding solid waste contracts last spring, "because that is a huge source of disagreement with the various vendors," Pool said. "The only way that we could bring all the vendors to the table to talk about the ins and outs of their contracts and try to get some agreement on fixes to the ordinance was to suspend the very document that they claimed was preventing them from talking with us about these matters."

At the same time, the Austin Water Utility is anxious to release its request for proposal for a new biosolids contract. Austin Water Director Greg Meszaros told the *Austin Monitor* it is critical to get the request for proposal out as soon as possible.

He explained, "The treatment of wastewater produces biosolids. Tons of that are created each day. It is taken from our wastewater plants and pumped over to our Hornsby facility where it undergoes additional processing. And then ultimately we have to dispose of that for the long run. There's various ways you can dispose of it. You can haul it to a landfill. We prefer more beneficial reuses, things like composting."

Meszaros said the company that currently has the contract is Synagro. Austin Water has been working at the new procurement for about two and a half years and extended the Synagro contract because they were unable to send out the request for proposal earlier. With the current extension expiring in March, Meszaros said the utility is very anxious to find a long-term resolution for handling biosolids.

Pool said she expects the request for proposal to include a notice that the anti-lobbying ordinance has been or will be reinstated, depending on the timing of the release of the request. However, Pool noted the "no contact" provisions of the ordinance would not be in effect until the bids are submitted. "In the past, the minute an RFP opened you were in the anti-lobbying, no contact" time, she said. But that will not be the case (<https://www.austinmonitor.com/stories/2017/08/council-consider-changes-waste-disposal-contracts/>) for waste contracts.

Photo by John Flynn.

The Austin Monitor's work is made possible by donations from the community. Though our reporting covers donors from time to time, we are careful to keep business and editorial efforts separate while maintaining transparency. A complete list of donors is available here (<http://www.austinmonitor.com/who-funds-us/>), and our code of ethics is explained here (<http://www.austinmonitor.com/about-us/>).