

Meeting Minutes



Meeting	Solid Waste User Fee Working Group – Meeting 1
Date	23/04/2025
Location	Margaret Mackinnon Community Room
Time	9:00-10:00am
Present	City of Guelph: Robertson Reid, Tracy Suerich, Nolan Kelly, Jordyn Divok, Ghina Tarhini Working Group: Hilary Ebert, Heather Grummett, Jason Durfey, Chad Root, Cidalia Melo, Jennifer Hunt
Regrets	Maxine Koehler (City of Guelph)

Discussion Items

1. Welcome and introductions
 - City identified emergency procedures and building amenities.
 - City provided an overview of the meeting and main topics to be discussed.
 - Participants were invited to introduce themselves and share about the importance of being part of this group. Interests of Working Group members included:
 - Concerns about additional fees and barriers to operating a business Downtown.
 - Sharing practical experience managing waste in different business settings.
 - Desire to maintain environmental performance and positive image around sustainability.
 - Desire to stay abreast of rapid changes and be involved in decision making.
2. General background on Working Group process
 - City reviewed objective set in Terms of Reference.
 - City provided an overview on the different funding systems for waste collection using local examples.
 - City explained the respective roles and responsibilities for City Staff, Working Group, and City Council:
 - Working Group provide input and feedback without having the authority to make decisions.
 - City Staff are responsible for making recommendations to Council.
 - City Council has the power of making decisions to direct the organization and pass budgets.

- City presented communication guidelines for productive and respectful conversation within the Working Group.
- Participants noted that they expect relevant background knowledge about interrelated Downtown projects to be provided to help inform discussions.

3. Downtown waste recent and upcoming projects timeline

- City presented the general timeline of the past, present and upcoming work and projects for the Downtown of Guelph. Timeline highlights were:
 - Latest Solid Waste Management Master Plan and resulting changes to the Waste Management Bylaw that affected small businesses outside the Downtown in 2023.
 - Downtown Waste Project engagement in 2023 that recommended an underground waste system for Downtown.
 - Council approval for the Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program streetscape level of service in 2024.
 - Council recommended Downtown Solid Waste User Fee Study, now ongoing in 2025 through this process.
 - End of special funding arrangement for Downtown recycling in 2026 and need to secure plan and funding for future.
 - Participants noted that recycling was perceived as important to Downtown businesses. Operationally, recycling is a large volume of material and its timely removal is important to avoid impeding business activities. It is also an important way to visibly contribute to sustainability, which is a shared goal for the City, businesses, and customers. Recycling is something businesses and customers rely on the City to facilitate.
- City elaborated the flow of the Working Group and the main topics to be discussed in each of the four scheduled meetings.

4. Review of current findings and knowledge

- City shared the main challenges that have been expressed by Downtown businesses. Participants also noted:
 - Property tax is considered high in comparison to the level of services provided by the City of Guelph.
 - Rent rates are high within the Downtown area.
 - Upcoming construction threatens businesses abilities to survive and staying Downtown.
 - Shortage of parking contributes to lost customers.
- City reviewed known issues and causes with waste disposal Downtown and the upcoming long-term infrastructure enhancements, and short-term pilot programs planned for summer 2025.
- City provided basic information on how taxes are collected and allocated, including a portion devoted to solid waste collection. City discussed that current operating budgets do not cover recycling or organics for the Downtown Collection Area.

5. Next steps

- Exercise about value provided by waste collection deferred to next meeting, which will focus on what waste collection services should be continued and how collection should work.
- Staff to catch absent members up with minutes, presentation slides, and invitation to connect one-on-one before next meeting to facilitate full participation.
- Group asked for potential next meeting times; poll to go out to all participants to find best time.