




County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 1, 2026

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Bryan J. Hill, County Executive 

SUBJECT: Solid Waste Unified Sanitary District Options

This memorandum provides staff's response to the August 26, 2025, Unified Sanitary District (USD) Board Matter (Attachment 1) and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for the future of solid waste management in Fairfax County.

Staff Response to August 2025 Board Matter

Consistent with the referenced Board Matter, the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) conducted a public forum for licensed haulers (private solid waste collection companies licensed to operate in Fairfax County) on January 16, 2026. A summary of the licensed hauler forum (Attachment 2) and survey results (Attachment 3) are available. DPWES also conducted a public forum for residential property owner association leadership on February 3, 2026. A summary of the residential association leadership forum (Attachment 4) and survey results (Attachment 5) are available. Recordings of both meetings and background information about USD are online:

fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/unified-sanitation-districts

These two most recent public forums are in addition to the extensive engagement conducted on USD since May 2024 (Attachment 6).

Recommendations on Future Solid Waste Management

Staff recommend the following actions regarding USD and County solid waste management:

1. Discontinue the USD proposal development.

The countywide residential USD is the most effective available, legal pathway for the County to achieve the waste diversion goals established in the [Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan](#), enable the County to regulate solid waste collection charges, and regulate the number of collectors operating in neighborhoods. However, public engagement continues to identify unresolvable concerns amongst some stakeholders regarding the superiority of private-sector versus public-sector service models. Alternative partial options previously identified (Attachment 7) including "opt-in" models will not achieve the economies of scale to enable substantial diversion at lower cost, will not allow countywide regulation or rates, and will not enable more efficient collection routing.

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Staff recommend the Board take formal action to end USD proposal development with direction for staff to communicate that decision to the community.

2. Fully transition existing County customers to contracted collection services.

Inefficiencies in the [disaggregated service areas](#) and increasing operational costs are driving billing rates for existing County-serviced Sanitary District customers to become increasingly uncompetitive with private collection costs. Proof-of-concept studies contracting this work have been successful and yielded operational costs less than the cost to provide this service with County employees. Existing collection employees can be transferred to other functions and existing equipment and facilities sold or repurposed.

Staff will pursue conversion of existing County collection customers to contracted services managed by the County beginning in FY2027.

3. Implement the new sustainability fee in FY2028.

Existing reserve funds which have been used to mitigate solid waste disposal costs (i.e., the “tip fee” paid by all customers) will continue to be depleted at an unsustainable level. Without recurring appropriations from the County General Fund or a new revenue source generating approximately \$14M annually, disposal costs will increase unsustainably for all County residents and businesses to cover operational expenses. This jeopardizes the County’s “flow control,” or ability to regulate where solid waste is disposed, and loss of flow control poses significant financial liability with respect to the County’s contractual obligations with Reworld where all County waste is incinerated. This additional revenue could also be used to ensure the continuation of important free services including household hazardous waste collection.

Staff recommend initiation of a new, countywide *ad valorem* assessment to be implemented in FY2028 to generate revenue sufficient to sustain solid waste disposal operations.

4. Pursue new legislative authority to enable substantive diversion.

Meaningful, cost-effective waste diversion requires a reliable, dedicated waste stream with a sufficient volume to attract private investment or create market conditions that enable recycling or reuse. For example, existing regional composting facilities are inadequate to manage organic waste from a countywide curbside food waste collection program, a voluntary “opt-in” service would exacerbate existing collection system inefficiencies with disaggregated service areas, and without an ordinance guaranteeing an adequate volume the County will not be able to attract the necessary private equity to build necessary new facilities. Pending solid waste legislation, including Senator Surovell’s SB 226, do not provide the necessary enabling authority for the County to initiate substantial new waste diversion programs (and SB 226 would apply primarily to schools and institutional cafeterias if the County adopted such an ordinance).

Staff recommend continuing to advocate for increased local authority in future legislative sessions, including the ability to regulate organic waste as a recyclable material countywide, to create favorable conditions to create meaningful waste diversion programs.

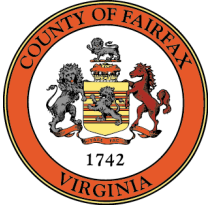
5. Continue to pursue enforcement of existing County code requirements.

DPWES has identified substantial existing commercial sector non-compliance with County Code Chapter 109.1 (*Solid Waste Management*), particularly for commercial recycling. In coordination with the Office of the County Attorney, DPWES will continue to pursue enforcement and levy fines to ensure existing code requirements are satisfied.

For more information, please contact DPWES Director Christopher Herrington.

Attachments: (1) August 26, 2025, Unified Sanitary District Board Matter
(2) Licensed Hauler Forum Summary
(3) Licensed Hauler Survey Results
(4) Residential Association Leadership Forum Summary
(5) Residential Association Leadership Survey Results
(6) Summary of Public Engagement on USD since May 2024
(7) Solid Waste Tip Fee and Future Service Delivery Options, October 2025

cc: Jennifer Miller, Deputy County Executive
Christina Jackson, Chief Financial Officer
Elizabeth Teare, County Attorney
Jay Doshi, Director, Department of Tax Administration
Philip Hagen, Director, Department of Management and Budget
Jennifer Van Ee, Legislative Director
Christopher Herrington, Director, DPWES
John Morrill, Director, Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination
Eric Forbes, Deputy Director, DPWES
Matthew Adams, Division Director, DPWES



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

Board Matter
Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn
With Chairman Jeffrey McKay and Vice-Chair Kathy Smith

August 26, 2025

Unified Sanitation District

Background: As the Board is aware, staff presented a proposal to initiate the state-mandated five-year process to determine whether Fairfax County should implement a Unified Sanitation District (USD) for our single-family residential customers. Since that time, there have been a lot of questions and concerns raised in the community, much of which has been based on inaccurate or incomplete information.

While the purpose of considering a USD is both to provide our single-family residents with better and more efficient service and to achieve County environmental goals, there may be options within a modified USD approach or within non-USD options that could achieve similar goals. After talking with many of you (one on one) and many residents, we have concluded it is in the best interest of all concerned, including the residents and the haulers, that we evaluate our options prior to initiating the five-year period, with the understanding that the five-year period will allow for continued analysis and corrections.

Motion: Therefore, I move that the staff develop potential options, including pros and cons of each option; conduct a public forum among staff, licensed haulers, and HOA representatives managing hauler contracts on behalf of residents with the goal of reaching agreement on the facts associated with the options; and develop a process for Board consideration and ultimate implementation of each. I further move that we not hold a public hearing on this matter until the above tasks are completed and viable options are vetted with the Board.

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Experience
HUNTER·MILL·DISTRICT
Supervisor Walter Alcorn

Attachment 2. Licensed Hauler Forum Summary

A Public Input survey was sent out to all licensed haulers holding a Certificate-To-Operate (CTO) in Fairfax County. The survey was open from December 17, 2025, until January 16, 2026. Only 9 of the 26 licensed collectors completed the survey.

On January 21, 2026, SWMP hosted a Licensed Hauler Forum with solid waste industry representatives holding a CTO. The discussion was broadcast on Channel 16 and included 25 representatives from 16 collectors and trade associations. A recording of the Trash Collectors Forum is available:

fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/unified-sanitation-districts

A summary of the key themes is provided below:

- **Support for goals, concern about mechanism:** Collectors broadly support the County's environmental and service objectives but are skeptical that a USD structure is the best tool to achieve them.
- **Preference for open market competition and customer choice:** Collectors emphasized that competition allows residents and HOAs to select haulers and service levels, drives innovation, and maintains price discipline.
- **Impacts on small/local haulers and local economy:** Many warned that a county managed USD could disadvantage or displace smaller local haulers and related businesses.
- **Cost and service risk concerns:** Collectors questioned whether a County managed USD could match or improve upon current private system costs and expressed concern about transition risks and the County's capacity to manage largescale contracted services.
- **Alternative approaches:** Collectors suggested the County rely more heavily on existing regulatory tools, enhanced performance standards, and partnerships to advance environmental goals without restructuring the current market.