



Legislation Text

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Environmental Commission Resolution to Recommend City Council Approve the City's Constituent Membership in the Washtenaw Regional Resource Management Authority (WRRMA) before June 1, 2019

Whereas, regional recycling authorities permit members to manage multiple materials in order to increase community diversion rates and decrease landfill amounts; to save costs through economies and efficiencies of scale that cities and counties cannot attain on their own; to share risk and investment among community partners; and to consolidate educational efforts and provide consistent messages to all residents within the authority; and

Whereas, there are more than a dozen authorities in Michigan, such as MMWA (Mid-Michigan Waste Authority), and within Southeast Michigan, such as WWRA (Western Washtenaw Recycling Authority), SOCRRA (South Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority), and RRRASOC (Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County) that have successfully reduced cost, increased diversion rates, and improved level of services; and

Whereas, the benefits that would accrue to Ann Arbor and its community partners by achieving an economy of scale through a regional authority would benefit Ann Arbor and its community partners rather than private or contract haulers; and

Whereas, in 2017 Washtenaw County amended its Solid Waste Plan to operate collaboratively within the County and regionally outside of the County for a comprehensive sustainable materials management strategy; and

Whereas, representatives from Ann Arbor Township, the City of Ann Arbor, the City of Dexter, Pittsfield Charter Township, the City of Saline, the Township of Scio, the City of Ypsilanti, and the Charter Township of Ypsilanti met monthly over a twelve-month period to draft Articles of Incorporation; and

Whereas institutions, such as University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University, were also part of this process; and

Whereas, the City of Ann Arbor participated in the Authority Formation Committee that developed Articles of Incorporation of the Washtenaw Regional Resource Management Authority (WRRMA); and

Whereas, Ann Arbor is the only municipality that participated in drafting WRRMA's Articles of Incorporation that has not joined the authority; and

Whereas the first-year dues for joining the authority is a relatively modest \$5,000 and defines a period in which the authority would coordinate communications, improve outreach to increase the quality and quantity of the recycling streams, gather and analyze member communities' concerns, define priorities, elect officers, and develop relevant metrics; and

Whereas, prospective authority representatives have expressed a strong desire to increase the quantity and quality of the recycling stream first, with a desire to move closer to zero waste over the long-term; and

Whereas, the Environmental Commission adopted a zero waste goal in 2007; and

Whereas, the City of Ann Arbor did not make any progress on its diversion rate, zero waste, or commercial recycling goals as specified in its 2013-2017 Solid Waste Resource Update Plan;

Whereas if Ann Arbor does not join WRRMA by June 1, 2019, the City must either submit a petition to each member to be added to the Authority or join as a non-voting member, a status that will eventually be offered to area institutions, such as the University of Michigan; and

Whereas, On January 24, 2019 Washtenaw County Public Works presented the Environmental Commission with background and information on WRRMA; and

Whereas, On January 24, 2019, the Environmental Commission unanimously approved a resolution to recommend that City Council approve the City become a constituent member of the Washtenaw Regional Resource Management Authority; and

Whereas, each member of the authority initially receives one vote, as the authority evolves and makes multi-year commitments, capital financing or long-term risk programming can be governed by weighted votes that protect the city's interests and offer the City commensurately greater influences; and

Whereas, the Authority is not empowered to impose unilateral directions or change contracts that affect members without gaining approval; and

Whereas WRRMA intends to integrate each charter community's current and future solid waste plans and assessments into WRRMA discussions on an ongoing basis, which means there is no benefit to waiting until the City's Solid Waste Resource Management Plan update is completed in July, 2019; and

Whereas the City's ability to determine specific contracts that meet Ann Arbor's living wage ordinance, require unionized employees, and other existing requirements would remain within the City's purview and would not be decisions over which the authority would have any governing power; and

RESOLVED, That the Environmental Commission recommends the City join Washtenaw Regional Resource Management Authority to develop a regional approach to materials management strategies and becomes a Constituent Member of WRRMA.