

## SWAC Advisory Committee Meeting

Feb. 13, 2026 - 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Hybrid Meeting (Zoom or King Street Center)

<b><u>SWAC Members Present</u></b>	
April Atwood, Marketing and Education	
James Borsum, Labor Representative	
Jay Blazey, Manufacturer	
Alissa Campbell, Waste Industry	
Cynthia Dampier, Community Representative	
Robin Freedman, Waste Industry	
Amy Lam, Local Elected Official	
Bill Louie, Citizen Representative	
Tyler Morgan, Agricultural Representative	
Laura Mork, Local Elected Official	
Leah Tischler, Public Interest Group	
Heather Trim, Recycling Industry	
Wendy Weiker, Waste Industry	
<b><u>King County Staff</u></b>	
Nathaniel Bennett, DNRP staff	
Ali Blum, SWD staff	
Sylvaine Bucher, SWD staff	
Alex Chew, SWD staff	
Theresa Curry Almuti, SWD staff	
Brian Halverson, SWD staff	
Christine Kim, SWD staff	
Patty Liu, SWD staff	
Casey Mellnik, SWD staff	
Kinyan Lui, SWD staff	
Mark Monteiro, SWD staff	
Amy Ockerlander, SWD staff	
Caitlin Singer, SWD staff	
Rebecca Singer, SWD Director	
Isabelle Trujillo, SWD staff	
John Walsh, SWD staff	
<b><u>Guests</u></b>	
Laura Belmont, Sound Cities Association	Katie Stickels, Dept. of Ecology
Carla Johnson, Republic Services	Rick Vahl, Waste Connections
Jeannette Jurgensen, Bin There Consulting	Hans Van Dusen
Joel Kohlstedt, Waste Management	Josh --
Brad Lovaas, WA Refuse and Recycling Association	

### **Call to Order and Introductions**

Chair Weiker called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

### **Meeting Minutes**

Borsum moved to approve the January MSWAC/SWAC minutes. Louie seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **Public Comment**

Stickels shared two items:

#### **1. 2026 Organics Regional Summits**

Ecology's Organics team will be hosting another round of summits this spring! This is an all-day, in-person opportunity for city and county solid waste management staff, service providers, facilities, and other organizations to connect with Ecology and come together to collaborate on organics collection and

implementing the [organics management laws](#). Each region will address their unique challenges, share opportunities, and discuss how to support each other when diverting and handling organics.

Register for your region:

- Northwest Region - Tuesday, April 28: [Register for Northwest](#)
- Southwest Region - Thursday, April 30: [Register for Southwest](#)
- Central Region - Tuesday, May 12: [Register for Central](#)
- Eastern Region - Wednesday, May 13: [Register for Eastern](#)

## 2. ORCA Waiver Applications Open Now

The Organics Recycling Collection Areas (ORCA) waiver application is now available for local jurisdictions. Visit Ecology's [ORCA webpage](#) for further instructions and information about the waiver process.

Jurisdictions that implement a solid waste management plan can apply for a waiver. Eligible applicants are counties or cities; though, Ecology recommended the impacted county and cities work together to submit a joint application. For the 2027 requirements, applicants can submit a waiver application in February.

### **SWD Updates**

Singer provided the SWD update.

### **Tonnage update**

Garbage tonnage in January was equivalent to last year (70,253 tons in 2026 vs. 70,251 tons in 2025). Please note that the Black River (Republic) tons are included in the 2025 tonnage. There were 1,662 tons to Black River in January of last year.

The recycling tonnage collected and diverted at transfer stations was at 29,600 tons through the end of 2025.

### **Flood debris disposal and recovery**

SWD provided additional free flood disposal opportunities in January and early February:

- Bow Lake, Shoreline, and Enumclaw Transfer Stations: Saturdays and Sundays through Feb. 8
- Snoqualmie Valley Drop off Event: Feb. 8-9

We will continue to accept debris at some of our transfer stations.

We continued collecting free flood debris at three of our transfer stations and hosted a special collection event last weekend for people in the Snoqualmie Valley to drop off their flood debris. This event was requested by members of the farming community, who are still in recovery and working to clean up their land.

With any disaster we experience, we undoubtedly learn something new. SWD conducted an after-action review with our internal team to identify areas in our planning, preparation, and disaster response that we want to sustain and build upon for future incidents or improve.

Singer expressed appreciation for the SWD team, the haulers, and the public for their cooperation and patience. Additionally, she thanked the partner cities for the high level of collaboration required to successfully execute these collection events.

We will also coordinate after action reviews with partners. We can bring this information to this committee too.

### **Transfer Station Signage Refresh**

SWD has been updating and unveiling new signage each of our transfer stations.

The new signage is a massive improvement that will improve safety and customer wayfinding. It also improves accessibility through visual communication and translations and creates a more unified customer experience across all of our transfer stations.

We have also created station specific fold out maps that are color coded to match the signs and guide customers through each location. These new fold out maps will replace about a half dozen of our brochures with the same content, but in a more user-friendly, site-specific way.

### **CAT Shack – Salvage and Reuse Effort**

SWD has a large, deconstructed steel frame structure, known as the CAT Shack (52' x 52' x 27') --that is being offered to King County cities for reuse through the Sound Cities Association.

The structure was assembled in 2017 for the maintenance of large equipment at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. The structure is in good condition, but is no longer needed by the division or other county departments

SWD is offering this structure for reuse, instead of demolition and recycling, in line with its commitments to reduce embodied emissions and demonstrate sustainable materials management.

SWD is hosting an informational meeting on Feb. 23 at 9 a.m. for King County cities that might be interested in receiving this structure. Immediately following the meeting, SWD will issue a short proposal/plan template for interested cities to complete and send to SWD by March 6.

A lottery system will be used to select a city to receive the structure. The selected city will have a couple of weeks to further assess feasibility and officially make the commitment to receiving the structure. If the selected city ends up declining, SWD will go to the next city in the lottery drawing.

The objective is to ensure long-term utility; if a city no longer needs the CAT Shack, it can be returned to the program for reuse by another municipality.

Mayors and city managers received this information, but please reach out to Blum if you have questions or would like the invite to the information session on Feb 23.

Campbell inquired about the criteria used to select the recipient of the shelter. Blum explained that after offering the shelter through the Sound Cities Association (SCA), there was significant interest from multiple parties. The team determined that a lottery system would be the most efficient and fair method of allocation.

Trim inquired about the current market value of the shelter. Singer provided a preliminary estimate of approximately \$100,000, while noting that the actual value could be lower.

### **Heart of Marymoor Restoration Project**

King County Parks and SWD launched The Heart of Marymoor Restoration Project, an innovative three-year pilot project within one of King County's most visible parks.

The project will transform an existing drainage swale located in a highly visited portion of Marymoor Park into a heart-shaped feature that serves as both a symbol of stewardship and a living laboratory for restoration science.

The project will evaluate compost and soil amendment treatments as part of the County's zero waste goals, demonstrating how locally produced compost can enhance soil health, infiltration, and native plant establishment. The site will also function as a public demonstration area—an accessible, visually engaging space that highlights sustainable restoration practices, supports pollinators, and preserves key view corridors within the park's open landscape.

### **Upcoming repair events**

Each year, SWD hosts a series of 10-12 community repair events at locations throughout the county.

At repair events, skilled volunteer "fixers" try to repair and mend small household and personal items, such as electronics, small furniture, and clothing. These events help keep items in use and out of the landfill.

We are sharing the first five scheduled events; additional events will be scheduled later this year, and we will share the dates and locations with committees.

- Saturday, March 14, 9:30 am-12:30 pm
  - White Center Fieldhouse, Steve Cox Memorial Park
- Wednesday, April 15, 3-6 pm
  - Covington Library
- Tuesday, April 28, 3-6 pm
  - Tukwila Community Center
- Saturday, May 16, 1:30-4:30 pm
  - Woodinville Library
- Saturday, June 6, 1:30-4:30 pm
  - Renton Library

### **Government Relations Administrator job posting**

SWD is recruiting for a new Government Relations Administrator to join Ockerlander and Blum on the Government Relations Team. This person will play a key role in staffing the division's Advisory Committees and working with our partners.

This is an important role that will work directly with you all, so we invite you to please share the [job posting](#) with your networks. The job closes on Feb. 25.

### **MSWAC Update**

No update.

### **Operations Update**

Monteiro provided an update of recent activities at the transfer stations.

Tonnage/staffing look ahead

- SWD transfer stations municipal solid waste (MSW) and Yard Waste (YW) tonnage is seasonal
- March begins the "busy" season for both MSW and YW
- Transfer station operator and scale operator staffing largely remain constant

- o Transportation staffing is directly related to inbound tonnage and Cedar Hills Regional Landfill projects
- We are increasing staff to be less reliant on overtime and provide more consistent service

#### Current Construction: Transfer Station Impacts

- Complete: Vashon Tipping Floor Resurfacing Project
- Underway: Factoria Tipping Floor Repair and Resurfacing – Dec. 1 to mid- Feb.
  - o Project on schedule
    - ♣ We are currently finalizing inspections and completing the final administrative requirements. The facility remains on track to resume operations next week.
  - o Monday-Friday: Open for commercial and closed for self-haul
  - o Saturday-Sunday: Open for self-haul and closed for commercial
    - ♣ Exception made for holiday make-up days: Saturdays Dec. 27 and Jan. 3
  - o Yard waste self-haul closed throughout the construction period
  - o Household hazardous waste services will remain open during normal hours
  - o Anticipate work to be done and normal operations to resume on 2/14

While the program typically aims to schedule major projects outside of peak service periods, certain timelines are dictated by external factors. These include contractual obligations and contractor availability, which have necessitated overlapping with the busy season for a limited number of projects.

#### 2026 Construction Projects: Look Ahead

- Enumclaw Tipping Floor Resurfacing Project
  - o Anticipated timing: late 2/16-3/23
  - o Minor impact anticipated; we anticipate top-loading for portion of project
- Houghton Chute Scales
  - o Anticipated timing: 3/23 - 3/27
  - o We will divert the public while working on commercial chutes
  - o We are distributing Title X to the affected cities and will install local signage as part of the outreach
- Bow Lake Compactor Rebuild
  - o Anticipated timing: 3/2026-5/2026
    - ♣ With procurement and SSI schedules, this was pushed out
  - o Minor impact anticipated
    - ♣ During this time, one compactor will be rebuilt while the other remains in operation. The operating compactor will be fully inspected and repaired as needed to ensure it remains functional throughout the project. We often run off one compactor.
- Generator Tie Ins for Compactor Sites
  - o During the October 2024 bomb cyclone, all our sites switched to generator power; however, compactors at the compactor sites could not operate on generator power. In response, we initiated a project to install tie-ins that allow mobile generators to be connected at those sites in the event of a power outage
  - o Anticipated timing: 3/2026 - 6/2026
  - o No anticipated impact for haulers or the public
  - o SCRTS will get a tie-in too
- SCRTS Access Road via Broadway

- o Anticipated timing: Q2
- o Impact TBD; potential congestion and wait times for haulers and public closure. SWD will have traffic flaggers on site to direct traffic and mitigate impacts
- o A site walkthrough conducted on Wednesday morning confirmed that the facility is in good condition; however, space constraints will require a reconfiguration of the entry gates and fencing. These adjustments are expected to be completed without impacting commercial or public access.

#### Operations Updates: Look Ahead

- Operations All-Staff Meeting: Sunday, March 22
  - o Delayed opening for SWD facilities – Title 10 notifications have been sent out
    - ♣ This delay provides the Operations team with a structured opportunity to engage with Director Singer in an open forum
  - o Majority of sites will be opening at 11:30 with some opening at 12:30
- Bow Lake South Processing Area
  - o Timing TBD – contract currently out for bid
  - o Impact TBD – impacts will likely be contained to recycling area
    - ♣ To ensure environmental compliance and protect public health, the entire recycling area will be covered to prevent rainwater from contaminating specific commodities. Construction will follow a two-phase model—like the floor resurfacing projects at other facilities—where one half of the area is completed before transitioning to the other to maintain operational flow.
- Hiring transfer station operators to transition from Algona Transfer Station to SCRTS
- Hiring truck drivers to decrease reliance on overtime

#### Cedar Hills Regional Landfill Area 8 Tipping

- The tipping area uses a standard gravel surface, but we know it can become muddy. During this period, we prioritize facility maintenance and safety while ensuring that staffing levels remain sufficient to meet operational needs.
  - o In response to hauler feedback, we are exploring options to minimize wetness and improve the area's usability.
- Heavy equipment operators perform daily maintenance on the active area which can change depending on the weather
- During periods of heavy rain, freezing temperatures, or other adverse weather, maintenance is limited to what can be safely performed.
- 2026 construction season will begin in March; changes to landfill conditions may affect on-site traffic patterns. The biggest reminder for everyone is to watch your speed when at the hill as there is changing elevations.
  - o A: Pay close attention to all posted traffic signage
  - o B: Follow designated traffic routes and instructions
  - o C: Always comply with site traffic control measures

Weiker inquired about the status of the gas capture transition. Monteiro noted that while the management of this transition was inherently complex, the process has been as seamless as possible. The focus is now on integrating systems and fostering collaborative workflows between teams.

Director Singer reinforced that the transition has exceeded expectations, highlighting several key successes:

- The facility has been producing gas consistently since the takeover.
- The division successfully hired the existing operational team, ensuring that specialized institutional knowledge remained on-site.

- Ongoing efforts are focused on verifying that all equipment meets safety standards and that all deferred maintenance is being addressed.
- Gas has been successfully pumped into the pipeline within the first few weeks of operation.

Singer intends to provide a future update once output stabilizes, which will include specific data on delivery volumes and the resulting financial impact.

Weiker highlighted the partnership with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) regarding renewable energy credits as a significant achievement for the division. Director Singer agreed, noting that while initial revenue and production estimates were intentionally conservative, the team is eager to evaluate the results of a full year of consistent operations.

Weiker relayed colleague concerns regarding the potential impact of the upcoming FIFA World Cup on waste volumes, noting that increased collection by haulers will likely heighten demand at SWD facilities. Director Singer confirmed that the division is coordinating a department-wide response, as the event will affect multiple service areas.

Beyond waste management, DNRP have been tasked with identifying practice locations for participating teams. The SWD is currently developing strategies to manage the projected increase in material and is collaborating closely with the City of Seattle to coordinate regional support and ensure the system can handle the anticipated surge in waste.

Weiker noted that several cities are planning large-scale "watch parties," which will further concentrate waste generation. Director Singer added that the region anticipates an influx of approximately 750,000 visitors to King County, emphasizing the scale of the logistical and disposal challenge facing the division.

While we didn't have the full numbers to give us the most robust numbers, our estimates were close and we feel that we are in a good place.

Lam inquired whether the transition to SWD management would result in a higher volume of gas capture compared to previous years. Director Singer clarified that while the physical volume might not significantly change, the financial and data landscape has shifted fundamentally. Under previous ownership by BEW, SWD received only a portion of the revenue and credits, and full financial disclosures were not required due to them being a private entity.

In preparation for the acquisition, the division developed conservative performance models based on:

- Analyzing similar gas-to-energy systems both nationally and within the county.
- Estimating credit yields and monetary value from PSE based on current landfill output.
- Intentionally underestimating potential returns to ensure the purchase represented a high-value investment with a strong ROI.

Singer noted that now that the division is directly managing production, they are identifying new operational efficiencies. While the initial models were limited by a lack of proprietary data from the previous owner, early results suggest that actual performance will exceed the original estimates, placing the division in a strong fiscal position.

### **2026 SWAC Draft Work Plan Approval**

Blum led this section.

We have incorporated member feedback from November, making several adjustments in coordination with the chairs. The annual agenda is designed to serve as a flexible framework rather than a rigid schedule.

Weiker emphasized that the agenda is a living document that can be updated as priorities evolve throughout the year.

Specific adjustments to the timeline were also discussed, with Weiker suggesting that the Title 10 legislation be moved from the first quarter to the second. However, Blum noted that she intends to bring the preliminary Title 10 information to the committee as early as next month's meeting to ensure the group stays informed.

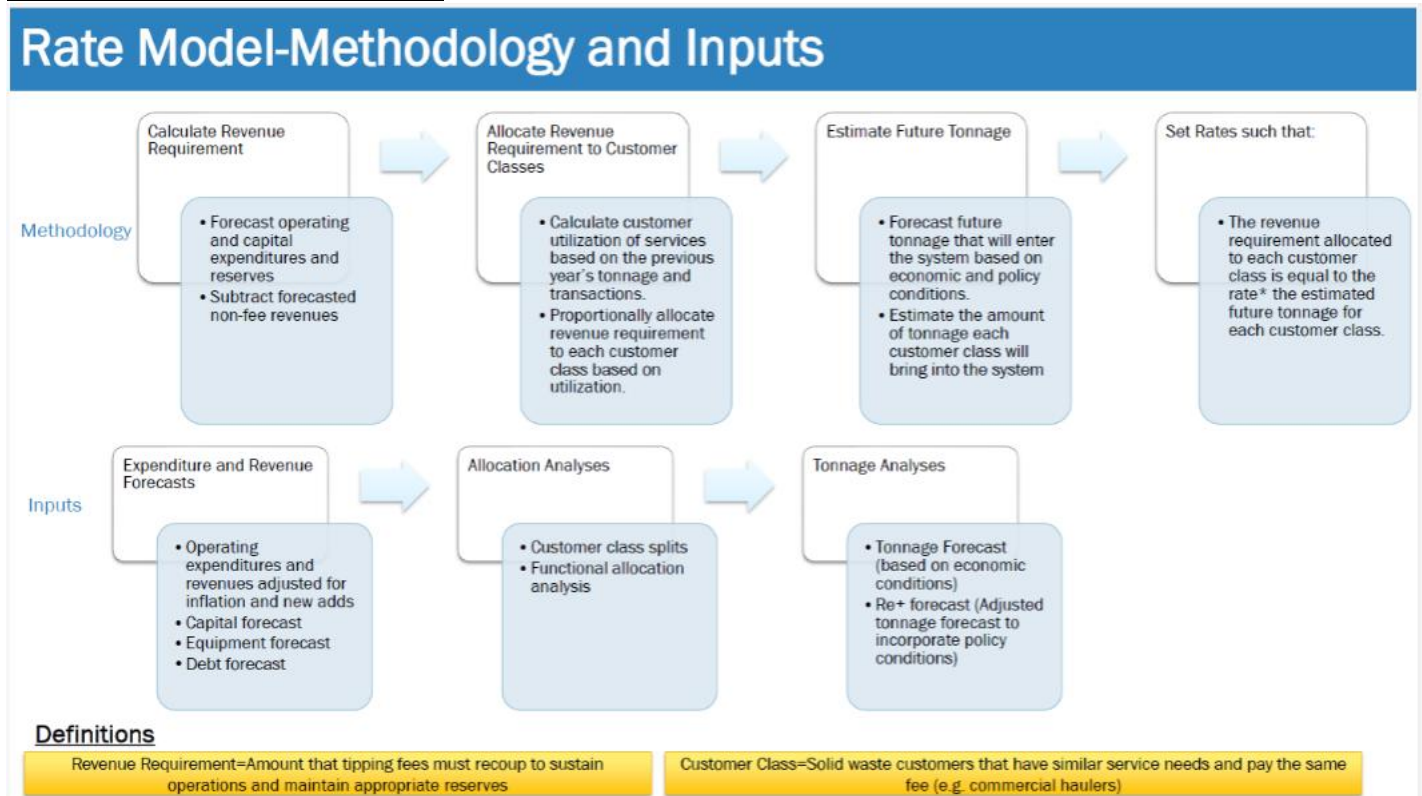
Louie motioned to approve the work plan. Lam seconded. The work plan was approved unanimously.

### **2027 Rate Early Look and Context Setting**

Chew led this discussion.

Chew stated that the presentation will begin by starting with a high-level overview of the rate process and methodology. After reviewing our current timeline, we'll discuss the primary drivers behind rate growth and provide an early outlook on the 2027 proposal. Please note that the six-year forecast is still being finalized as several key inputs remain under development. We will conclude with a Q&A session.

### **Rate model-methodology and inputs**



The rate-setting process is driven by two primary objectives:

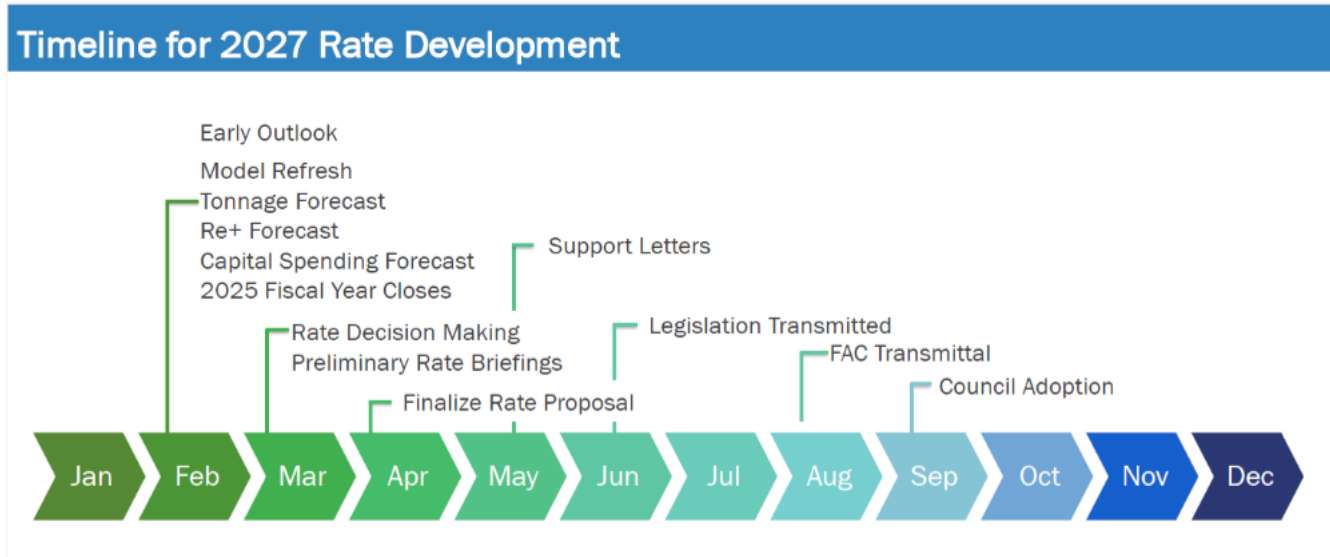
1. Resource Adequacy: Ensuring the division can meet current and future operational needs while maintaining healthy reserves.
2. Equity: Aligning tipping fees and customer rates with actual system utilization.

To achieve this, our methodology consists of four key components:

1. Determining the revenue requirement

- a. We calculate the total funding needed based on:
  - i. Operating Costs: Existing expenses adjusted for inflation.
  - ii. Strategic Adds: New resources required to meet evolving regulatory mandates.
  - iii. Capital & Equipment: Forecasted costs for infrastructure and machinery.
  - iv. Reserve Targets: Funding necessary to maintain financial stability.
2. Allocating costs
  - a. We distribute the revenue requirement across customer classes based on system usage. By analyzing the tonnage each group brings into the system, we ensure that costs are allocated proportionally to historic utilization.
3. Forecasting tonnage
  - a. Using sophisticated modeling, we estimate future system utilization. This allows us to predict how much volume we will manage across different customer segments in the coming years.
4. Establishing rates
  - a. Finally, we set tipping station rates designed to recoup the allocated revenue requirement. This ensures that the fees charged to each customer class are directly aligned with their projected tonnage and the costs they impose on the system.

Timeline for 2027 rate development



Our current timeline mirrors the previous rate-setting cycle, keeping us on track to transmit the rate proposal to the Council in June 2026. We are currently finalizing the key inputs for the rate model, including our tonnage and capital spending forecasts. Additionally, we are refreshing the rate model itself; while this may lead to minor changes in the materials accompanying our legislative transmittal, the primary goal is to increase transparency and more clearly communicate specific rate drivers to our customers.

Although not explicitly detailed on the timeline graphic, our engagement with MSWAC and SWAC remains a priority. We will provide further details regarding our planned work with these advisory committees at the conclusion of this presentation.

Rate drivers

- Inflation + regulation = mostly out of our control

- o During the rate development process, we identified three distinct categories of influence. The first category includes external factors beyond our control, such as inflation and new regulatory requirements. As seen in the 2026/27 budget, evolving compliance standards often mandate additional testing or certifications. While these requirements sometimes necessitate new positions, we remain committed to working within our existing resources, only authorizing additional expenditures when essential for regulatory adherence.
- Tonnage + labor costs = limited control
  - o The second category involves factors where we have limited influence. While programs like "Sort It Out" can affect tonnage to some degree, overall system utilization is primarily driven by consumer behavior.
- Capital expenditure needs + operating expenditures = somewhat in our control
  - o We are focusing our efforts on this category: internal factors within our control, specifically capital and operating expenditures.

#### Rate growth-push and pull

- Actions we are taking to control rate growth:
  - o Our primary focus is reprioritizing and reassessing capital needs; delaying costs where possible to keep near term rates lower and to lower debt service.
    - ♣ Capital debt is a significant factor currently driving the rate. For example, by adjusting the timeline for our permanent facilities, we are taking the necessary time to ensure our long-term infrastructure investments are both fiscally responsible and strategically sound. Our goal is to make the best possible decisions for the division's future footprint.
    - ♣ The process remains ongoing, and further decisions anticipated in the coming months will continue to influence the final rate determination.
  - o Limiting operational adds (our goal for 26-27 is to live within our existing appropriation, decisions for outyears pending)
    - ♣ Limit hiring new staff and making expansions to our operations except those that are required by regulation
  - o Exploring operational options to control costs (e.g. evaluating vacated positions for potential repurpose to fit business needs)
  - o Opening new revenue streams (CHARGE, estimated ~\$6M in net revenue for 2027).
- Risks we face that could lead to rate growth:
  - o Inflation spike
  - o Policy actions that reduce tonnage coming into our system (e.g. state Organics laws passed in the last two years HB 1799, HB 2301)
  - o New regulatory requirements
  - o Need to maintain/replace aging infrastructure
    - ♣ We are building contingencies to safeguard our service levels against potential equipment downtime or unexpected failures.

Mork inquired about the methodology currently being used to reprioritize capital projects. Chew noted that the division is undergoing a comprehensive review of its capital portfolio to better align future needs with fiscal responsibility, ensuring that projects are not initiated prematurely.

Singer expanded on this, explaining that while the SWD has an extensive list of necessary capital projects, a formal prioritization system has not yet been established. The division is now moving toward a "capital portfolio" approach,

which evaluates whether the right projects are being executed at the optimal time and cost. Key objectives of this new framework include:

- Determining if existing projects still align with the division’s evolving long-term goals.
- Identifying opportunities to combine projects that may be far apart on a traditional list but logically coincide, thereby saving costs and increasing efficiency.
- Transitioning from a simple list to a robust ranking system that justifies every dollar spent.

Singer estimated that it will take approximately one year to develop this robust portfolio process, with the full cycle expected to be integrated by the second year. In the interim, the division is evaluating immediate needs based on available data until the comprehensive ranking and evaluation system is fully implemented.

Mork expressed strong interest in the new prioritization framework, emphasizing the inherent risks involved in deferring projects. She noted that delays can often lead to increased costs in the long term and requested confirmation that these variables would be integrated into the new process. Singer agreed, acknowledging that while these risks have not traditionally been part of the decision-making process, they are a primary concern.

Lam inquired about potential revenue sources beyond the CHRG facility. Chew clarified that while the division pursues smaller revenue streams such as grants, these represent a relatively small percentage of the overall budget. The division remains primarily funded through tipping fees and the gas production revenue from the CHRG facility.

Weiker requested clarification on how the Fixed Annual Charge (FAC) is utilized to mitigate tonnage uncertainty and manage risks related to rate growth. Chew confirmed that the FAC methodology remains consistent with previous years, explaining that the charge is calculated based on a portion of the commercial tonnage entering the system. He noted that while the division could simply implement a higher tipping fee to recoup these costs, the FAC is currently used as a mechanism to stabilize and "smooth out" revenue throughout the year, allowing for a lower base tipping fee.

Weiker expressed concern regarding the transparency of this model, observing that as the FAC continues to rise, a stable tipping fee does not accurately reflect the total cost increases to stakeholders. She argued that shifting costs from the tipping fee to the FAC makes it more difficult for the public and haulers to see the true impact on rates. Weiker emphasized that the original intent of the rate model was to provide stability for infrastructure funding; however, with the FAC increasing significantly each year, the tipping fee is no longer a fully representative metric of what users are paying to sustain King County’s infrastructure.

Early look at 2027 rate (tentative)

We are sharing a preliminary estimate for the 2027 rate based on current data. Please note that a comprehensive six-year forecast is not yet available, as several key inputs remain under development.

Fee Revenue	UOM Type	2026 Rate Adopted	2027 Prior Model	% Increase	2027 Preliminary Rate
Commercial (Tipping Fee)	Per Ton	\$179.18	\$194.00	8.27%	\$192.00
Self -Haul	Per Ton	\$229.08	\$258.00	12.62%	\$245.00
Regional Direct	Per Ton	\$194.89	\$219.30	12.52%	\$209.00
Yard Waste	Per Ton	\$129.38	\$129.38	0.00%	\$138.00
Special Waste	Per Ton	\$275.14	\$310.00	12.67%	\$294.00

Cedar Hills Other excludes Reg. Direct	Per Ton	\$179.18	\$194.00	8.27%	\$192.00
Minimum (self-haul)	Transaction	\$36.62	\$41.28	12.73%	\$39.00
Appliances	Transaction	\$30.00	\$30.00	0.00%	\$32.00
Mattresses	Transaction	\$30.00	\$30.00	0.00%	\$32.00
Cleanup Lift	Transaction	\$20.00	\$20.00	0.00%	\$20.00
Fixed Annual Charge - Calculated		\$26,838,510	\$30,864,287	15.00%	\$28,717,206

Division staff are working on strategies to minimize rate increases while ensuring that critical infrastructure and reserves are supported.

Following the feedback received on the significant increases presented last year, we have spent the past several months evaluating our 2027 projections. Our primary goal was to determine if we could meet our revenue requirements while adjusting the overall rate increase down to approximately 7% across the board.

These figures are preliminary, but we are hopeful that a further review of our capital program may allow us to maintain or even reduce this percentage.

#### Rate development next steps

Timing	Process Milestone
Today	Early Rate Outlook (MSWAC/SWAC)
By 2/27/26	Rate Model and Forecast Development Complete
By 3/31/26	Rate Decision Making Complete
By 3/31/26	Preliminary Rate Briefings Complete
By 4/30/26	Final Rate Agency Proposal Complete
By 5/13/26	Draft Support Letter Shared at SWAC/MSWAC meetings (5/8 and 5/13)
By 6/20/26	Final Support Letter Approved at SWAC/MSWAC meetings (6/10 and 6/20)
By 6/30/26	Executive Proposed Legislation transmitted; Council deliberations begin
By 8/31/26	Fixed Annual Cost Allocation Transmittal Complete
By 9/30/26	Council Rate Adoption

Please note that several of these milestones are target dates. We are currently projecting to have the formal agency rate proposal completed by the end of April, which will allow us to share the proposal with the committees during their May meetings. At that time, we also plan to submit the first draft of the recommendation letters to the group. Our goal is to have the final version of the letter approved by the June meeting, ensuring we are positioned to transmit the final legislation to the King County Council by the end of June.

Weiker requested clarification on the "Regional Direct" charge and how it differs from "Cedar Hills Other." Chew explained that Cedar Hills figures distinguish between Regional Direct (commercial waste hauled directly to the landfill) and other non-commercial waste brought to the site. Weiker further requested that the internal charts be updated to change the label from "Commercial FAC" to "Commercial Tipping Fee" to ensure greater transparency and ease of understanding for stakeholders.

The discussion then shifted to the proposed 7% rate increase for 2027. Singer noted that the division was tasked with reducing the rate as much as possible from the initial proposal. To achieve the 7.24% target, the SWD has taken several measures, including:

- Operating Costs: Maintaining status quo spending levels.
- Project Deferral: Moving specific capital projects to later years to spread out debt service.
- Single-Year Strategy: Due to the shifting financial landscape, the division is currently utilizing a single-year rate model, necessitating a full re-evaluation for the 2028–2029 cycle.

Regarding specific rate values, Freedman inquired about the 2025 Regional Direct rate per ton. Singer explained that a miscalculation in the previous 2025 rate model resulted in the rate being approximately \$20 lower than intended. Consequently, the 2027 rate appears significantly higher because it uses the corrected baseline in addition to the new increase.

Weiker questioned why the Regional Direct rate is higher than the standard tipping fee, arguing that haulers should theoretically receive a discount for bypassing transfer stations and delivering directly to the landfill. Singer committed to following up with Dave Pierce to provide a technical explanation for this pricing structure.

### Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan Update

Liu gave this update.

Rail impacts – additional analysis we are conducting

- Both waste export by rail and mass burn will create additional rail traffic from either MSW or ash export
- The LTD study acknowledged more rail analysis would be beneficial
- SWD has heard requests for more information on rail impacts from:
  - o Partner cities
  - o Sound Cities Association Public Issues Committee
  - o Regional Policy Council
- SWD is working with a consultant to conduct a study that addresses partner needs

### Timeline



#### Rail traffic study – supplemental environmental impact statement

- Proposed study will analyze the impact of new marginal train traffic for both waste export and mass burn plus ash export:
  - Create a rail crossing inventory and map
  - Group crossings into three tiers based on potential impacts
  - Assess frequency, duration, and time of day for train blockages
  - Vehicle queuing impacts at the highest volume crossings

The division is currently evaluating two primary rail routes for waste transport: a southern route through Portland before heading east, or an initial eastward route followed by a southern turn. While a specific path has not yet been finalized, the team is analyzing the logistical advantages and requirements of each option.

During the discussion, Lam and Mork raised concerns regarding the potential impact of these rail operations on emergency vehicle response times and local transit. Liu acknowledged that coordination with transit and emergency services is a critical component that the team must still address.

Further discussion focused on route redundancy and emergency contingencies. Liu noted that while there are currently two primary rail routes being considered, the division is working with haulers to establish contingencies like the model used by the City of Seattle, where rail companies can utilize alternative tracks if a primary line is obstructed. In the event of severe disruption or natural disaster, trucking remains the primary fallback option to ensure service continuity. Mork emphasized the importance of fully understanding all alternatives and "what-if" scenarios to ensure the system remains resilient under pressure.

#### Engagement – we really want to hear from you

- SWD will reach out to most impacted cities to discuss this scope
- Others can feel free to reach out to:
  - Amy Ockerlander – [aockerlander@kingcounty.gov](mailto:aockerlander@kingcounty.gov) or (206) 253-6701
  - Ali Blum – [ABlum@kingcounty.gov](mailto:ABlum@kingcounty.gov) or (206) 253-6995

The division is prioritizing a feedback process specifically for communities that will be directly affected by the rail operations.

Weiker suggested that a map showing existing infrastructure would be a valuable tool for these outreach efforts. Liu confirmed that an infrastructure map is currently available on the division's website for public reference.

#### **2026 State Legislation Update**

Ockerlander gave this update.

The 2026 legislative session will be a short session (60 days). It started Jan. 12, 2026, and the last day is expected to be March 12, 2025.

#### Cutoffs are coming fast:

- House of Origin Policy: **Feb. 4 - PASSED**
- House of Origin Fiscal Policy: **Feb. 9 - PASSED**
- House of Origin: **Feb. 17**
  - Anything that has not passed out of the House/Senate is dead unless it is needed for the budget

- Opposite House Policy: **Feb. 25**
- Opposite House Fiscal: **March 2**
- Opposite House: **March 6**
- Sine Die: **March 12**

Solid waste related bills in process 2026:

- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Textiles (building on HB 1420)
  - This is dead for the session. We expect this to come back next year.
- Improving the end-of-life management of Electric Vehicle Batteries (building on HB 1550/SB 5586)
  - Dead for the session.
- Increasing Solid Waste Collection Tax (building on HB 2018)
  - Appears to be dead for the session.
- Deposit-Return System (DRS) for Beverage Containers (HB 1607)
  - This is in the rules committee.
- EPR for Mattresses (building on HB 1901)
  - Dead for the session.
- EPR for Sharps (building on Safe Sharps Advisory Group)
  - This will be moving on to the next session.
- Amending the single-use plastic bag ban (HB 2233)
  - Dead for session.
- Post-consumer recycled content requirements (2271)
  - This is moving forward and would add more recycled content requirements into plastics.
  - This is in the rules committee, and we will find out on 2/16 if it moves forward
- NEW: Providing local governments with tax resources and fund flexibility (HB 2442/SB6294)
- NEW: Concerning naturally occurring fibrous silicate materials (HB2605/SB6213)
  - This bill changes the asbestos levels allowed in construction products and removes the labeling requirements.
  - It is moving quickly and there is mixed concern about if this will have a public health impact
  - It is in the rules committee, and we will see what happens.
- 2301 will move forward and is in rules for review

### **Revenue Service Agreement Overview**

Kohlstedt and Johnson provided this overview.

### **Innovation in Waste Reduction: WM and King County**

Kohlstedt highlighted the broad impact of these initiatives on county residents and shared several program examples. Subsequently, Johnson from Republic Services presented highlights from their work with unincorporated King County customers.

Revenue Service Agreement (RSA) partnership – WUTC, King County and WM

This innovative model is a three-way partnership between King County, WM, and the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC).

- Partnerships for over 15 years
  - Long-standing collaboration between King County, WM and the WUTC

- o WM and Republic have been a part of these agreements for over 15 years. WM recently concluded their latest cycle, which began in January 2024, seeing excellent results. They are now gearing up for even more impactful work in the upcoming 2026/2027 cycle.
- WUTC
  - o For those unfamiliar with the WUTC, their role is to set rates and service standards for residents in unincorporated areas. While the WUTC manages these functions outside of city limits, service inside city boundaries is handled through specific municipal contracts and contract managers.
- Resident impact
  - o The WUTC exists to provide consumer protection in unincorporated areas by ensuring predictable, fair rates and maintaining strict standards for service, safety, and responsiveness.
- RSA origins
  - o This partnership was formed because WUTC tariffs provide a regulated framework to fund recycling and education programs for unincorporated residents.
- Funding
  - o The RSA works by directing up to 50% of revenue from recyclable sales into a dedicated recycling education fund that supports innovation, education, and R&D programs.
- Households benefitting
  - o These programs apply exclusively to residential and multi-family customers; commercial accounts are not included in this framework.
  - o For WM, there are 40,597 UTC-regulated unincorporated customers in King County. Some of their core regions of incorporated customers are around Federal Way, Redmond, Kirkland, Woodinville, White Center and Tukwila.
  - o Republic serves an additional 37,000 unincorporated households.
- Unique innovation and R&D focused programming
  - o The power of these programs lies in their capacity for innovation. Rather than repeating static outreach, they pilot new strategies and conduct targeted studies to drive meaningful behavior change across King County households.

Ultimately, their program goals are simple and aligned: to increase recycling, decrease contamination, and reduce food waste as part of a broader commitment to waste reduction

Most of WM's work falls under "Access and education for all"

- Inclusive programming
  - o Outreach is customized for the area's diverse population, accounting for cultural and linguistic differences, age groups, and specific housing types, from single-family homes to multi-family complexes, etc.
- Expertise and resources
  - o Executing such diverse outreach requires significant expertise. To meet this need, WM employs seven full-time educators dedicated to inclusion and access throughout the Puget Sound region, supplemented by a seasonal team of 10 to 12 interns each summer.
- Scientific approach
  - o They utilize a research-based framework for all campaigns, training their staff to use evidence-backed strategies that ensure long-term behavior change.
    - ♣ Example: A typical approach to improving apartment recycling might involve a lobby "happy hour" to discuss proper sorting. To elevate this into a behavior change strategy, educators not only provide information but also ask tenants to sign a simple pledge to keep liquids and food

out of recycling bins. This is based on the proven principle that people who commit to an action in writing are significantly more likely to follow through.

- ♣ Example: Research shows that individuals are more likely to change their habits when they perceive a new behavior as the "social norm." For instance, seeing most shoppers carrying reusable bags into a grocery store creates a subtle social pressure, making others more likely to adopt the same habit to align with the community.

#### Program deliverable highlights

- Scrappy kitchen events
  - Celebrity chefs at farmers' markets to turn food scraps into tasty treats
- Multifamily outreach and pilots
  - In addition to collecting textiles and testing behavior change tactics, the team conducted outreach at over 150 properties. This work focused on the 'Four Cs'—Capacity, Clarity, Colocation, and Color—to ensure every location has the necessary infrastructure for a successful recycling program.
    - ♣ Beyond new training videos for property managers, the team collaborated with the Refugee Artisan Initiative to create upcycled recycling totes from repurposed banners. Additionally, they launched a multi-family textile collection program, successfully onboarding their first property.
- Innovative engagement strategies
  - Using existing communities and events to engage customers:
    - ♣ Latinas Textile Project: They partnered with the Latinas Textile Project to meet residents where they already gather: Facebook community groups. By fostering leadership from within these groups, we helped divert 7,500 pounds of textiles and sparked 4,500 conversations in only six weeks.
    - ♣ Siempre a La Mano: This campaign promoted a "Bring Your Own Cup" habit by encouraging residents to grab their reusable cups as instinctively as their keys or wallets. The team engaged 1,100 people at 21 King County events and reached another 130,000 people online, resulting in over 8,300 meaningful digital interactions.
- Waste reduction in schools
  - The program provided 11 schools with waste reduction infrastructure, including durable lunch trays, recycling bins, water bottle filling stations, and reusable ice packs.
    - ♣ Some schools currently dispose of over 1,000 single-use ice packs a year.
  - A new waste reduction toolkit was also developed as a resource for teachers, parents, and student green teams.
- Behavior study findings (in progress)
  - Future updates on these results will be shared with the committee, as they are already being used to shape the 2026/2027 program cycle
- Innovation.wmnorthwest.com - all programs can be found here

For questions, reach out to Joel Kohlstedt, Partnership Manager – Waste Reduction and innovation PNW Public Sector Solutions at [jkohlste@wm.com](mailto:jkohlste@wm.com) or 425-652-0862.

Johnson introduced herself as a contract administrator with Republic Services, where she has served for 11 years, working closely with municipal contracts and education outreach teams. In collaboration with King County Program Administrator Casey Mellnik, she reviews behavioral studies and program outcomes to develop waste reduction and diversion strategies. These efforts are guided by the five key tasks outlined in their two-year implementation plan.

As Kohlstedt noted, 50% of the revenue is invested into education and diversion programs for single-family, multi-family, and community audiences; any remaining funds are credited back to the customers. Since the implementation of 'China Sword,' the onset of COVID-19, and recent economic shifts, these revenues have fluctuated significantly. While annual available spending previously reached \$500,000, it has more recently leveled at \$100,000. This reduction does not signify a decrease in work, but rather a shift away from third-party consultants toward an increase in 'boots on the ground' efforts from internal outreach staff.

For Republic Services, the King County RSA is a two-year plan: Aug. 1, 2025 to July 31, 2027.

- Task 1: Timeline
- Task 2: Monthly data collection and reporting
- Task 3: Single-family residents contamination reduction education
- Task 4: Multi-family outreach
- Task 5: Community outreach

Areas served in King County

- North King County – Bellevue Division Tariff 11
  - Beaux Arts
  - Hunts Point (all services weekly)
  - Medina
  - Kenmore
  - Unincorporated areas around Klahanie (Sammamish)
- South King County – Kent Division Tariff 26 & 27
  - Black Diamond
  - Unincorporated areas around Auburn, Renton, Issaquah-Hobart, North Bend, Snoqualmie and Fall City

Total customer count:

- Single-family: 37,000
- Multi-family: 110

Building on the programs shared by Kohlstedt, Republic Services has focused on recycling education and the recent implementation of food waste reduction initiatives in alignment with the Organics Management Law (OML). Each year, the team visits multi-family properties to address service issues, optimize container sizes, and provide resources—including reusable recycling bags and educational guides translated into seven languages. They also refresh container decals and enclosure signage to ensure clarity for residents. Since introducing compost service, they have worked closely with property managers to expand adoption and provide tenants with food scrap buckets and instructional materials.

Beyond standard engagement at community events, the team conducts extensive annual cart-tagging projects. This year, in collaboration with specialized consultants and daily efforts from drivers, the team will tag 8,000 households. This initiative features a newly developed cart tag, which was vetted through focus groups to ensure an educational tone. By pivoting away from traditional "oops" tags, the program aims to provide constructive guidance that fosters long-term behavioral changes among residents.

The team is also identifying the most effective communication outlets to connect with Spanish-speaking residents. Insights from recent focus groups revealed that these audiences often receive information through unique community sources. Consequently, the team is partnering with the Recycle Right Consortium to leverage existing, high-quality Spanish-language campaigns. By building upon these established regional resources, they are launching targeted social media and community education campaigns designed to resonate specifically with these residents.

The program's school outreach focuses on empowering students to lead by example, often "training the adults" in their lives. Within school "green teams," student volunteers take an active and enthusiastic role in sustainability projects. Last fall, initiatives included a textile drive for school mascot apparel, where outgrown clothing and surplus t-shirts were repurposed into reusable bags to teach the value of reuse. At another school, a group of fourth and fifth graders developed food waste sorting posters and presented them to every classroom, explaining exactly which items from their school breakfasts and lunches belonged in the compost. Students also engaged in hands-on science projects, using microscopes and magnifying glasses to examine compost piles and identify materials that contaminate the soil.

To supplement in-person learning, the "Recycling Simplified" website offers virtual tours of recycling centers and landfills, alongside grade-appropriate curricula for both teachers and home educators. Furthering this commitment to transparency, a dedicated Learning Center was established in 2023 at the South Seattle recycling facility. The center welcomes the public for weekly tours, available Monday through Friday by appointment. Committee members are encouraged to reach out to Johnson if they would like to schedule a visit to see these operations firsthand.

**Member Comment**

No comment.

**Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 11:14 a.m.