Council Direction:

At its meeting on November 28, 2007, Council approved recommendation (d) of Public Works report PW07151 that the two temporary Waste Customer Service Coordinator positions, funded through the Waste Management operating budget since April 2006, continue as temporary positions for an eighteen-month term. Staff were to report back on the future need for the positions prior to the end of the revised term. The positions were originally recommended in Report PW06101a “Green Cart Staffing Follow Up”, and were approved by Committee of the Whole on March 8, 2006 for a two year term between April 2006 to April 2008.

Information:

The information contained in this report has City wide implications and relate to the City’s waste management customer service.

The City’s waste management programs have undergone significant changes since 2001 with the introduction of various components of the City’s Solid Waste Management Master Plan including new waste collection programs and revised container limits for eligible properties.

To support these major changes, two temporary Customer Service Coordinator positions were approved by Committee of the Whole through Staff Report PW06101a, “Green Cart Program Staffing Follow Up” on March 8, 2006. These positions were initially approved for a two-year temporary term starting in April 2006 to coincide with the introduction of the green cart program and the voluntary compliance of the former Solid Waste Management By-Law 05-190. The continued need for these positions was reviewed in October 2007 as part of the Waste Management Division’s options to help increase waste diversion. These positions were extended for an additional eighteen-month term through Staff Report PW07151, “Status of Solid Waste Management Master Plan, Diversion Goals and Landfill Capacity”.
The Waste Management Division currently has four Customer Service Coordinators, with two of these positions being full-time permanent positions and the other two being temporary full-time positions. Two Customer Service Coordinators are assigned to handle customer service issues in the “A zones” which includes Flamborough, Dundas, and downtown Hamilton, with the other two positions handling the “B zones” which includes Ancaster, Glanbrook, Hamilton Mountain, and Stoney Creek.

The main focus of the Customer Service Coordinator positions is to help educate the public to understand and comply with the waste management programs. The City’s Customer Contact Centre receives approximately 2000 calls per week related to waste management programs which need to be input into the City’s Hansen system. These calls include requests for general waste management information, booking appointments for bulk waste collection, and other service requests. Waste Management Customer Service staff including Customer Service Data Clerks and Customer Service Coordinators respond to more than 500 of these calls each week. Follow-up for these calls include clarification on waste management services, mailing program information, dispatching work requests to collection service providers, and completing site visits. Customer Service staff also respond to approximately 100 to 200 email requests on a weekly basis received through the Waste Management Division’s email address, wastemanagement@hamilton.ca. Staff is also required to respond to curbside collection concerns relayed from waste collection operators in the field. The Customer Service Coordinators are also responsible for handling and resolving escalated calls received through the City’s Customer Contact Centre and other City Departments including calls from the Councillor’s Office.

The Customer Service Coordinator duties include both working inside the office as well as field work. On an average day, two Customer Service Coordinators are available in the office to respond to inquiries while the other two Coordinators complete field work including twenty to thirty field visits each per day. The field work for these staff include:

- Site checks to ensure properties are setting out waste materials in a correct manner;
- Visiting property owners to provide education in person;
- Distributing waste management program information to properties which may have issues with their curbside setout;
- Delivering supplies which may be requested during visits with property owners such as recycling containers, green carts, and program information;
- Collecting waste materials which may have been missed or not collected for other reasons, e.g. non-compliance. Customer Service Coordinators may collect these waste items on a case by case basis after educating the property owner on the waste management program requirements.

Compliance with the Waste Management By-law has predominantly been done by the Waste Management Customer Service Co-ordinators. The Waste Management Division has a phased approach to handle compliance issues with properties. The in-person customer service provided by the Customer Service Coordinators has proven to be a successful approach in encouraging compliance of the by-law by residents rather than the alternative of sending out a City By-law Enforcement Officer.

The number of service requests which require response from Waste Management Customer Service staff has increased significantly particularly with the introduction of
program changes such as the green cart rollout, multi-residential organics collection program and most recently the “one plus one” waste container limit for residential households which began in April 2009. As an example, the number of calls received between April 2009 to June 2009 increased by approximately 23% in comparison to the same period in 2008. Customer Service Coordinators have also increased the number of field visits significantly as a result of the waste container limit. Staff is confident that there will continue to be a strong need for these four Customer Service Coordinator positions. Effective customer service will be required for upcoming programs including the one container limit for residential properties starting in April 2010, the green cart program for multi-residential properties which is underway, and expanded waste diversion programs for eligible commercial properties in 2010.

Proactive customer service is critical to the success of the City’s waste management programs since Customer Service staff are the main point of contact with the public concerning waste management program information.

The temporary positions are being extended for an additional thirty months until the end of April 2012 to coincide with the 2012 budget deliberations. This approach will allow customer service staff to be available to handle upcoming waste management programs including the one container limit for residential properties in 2010, support for the multi-residential waste diversion program, expansion of the waste diversion program for eligible commercial properties, and continued enforcement of the Solid Waste Management By-law 09-067. Staff will review the future need for the positions and will report back to Council prior to the end of the revised term.

The two temporary Customer Service Coordinator positions are currently funded through the Waste Management Division’s annual Operating Budget at a cost of approximately $130,000. The temporary positions are currently part of the approved Waste Management Division’s complement; therefore, the changes have no impact on staffing levels or budget.

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Gerry Davis, CMA
General Manager
Public Works Department