

## RESOLUTION

### Board of Hennepin County Commissioners

#### RESOLUTION: 25-0296 R2

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At a meeting of the Board of Hennepin County Commissioners, a motion was made by Commissioner Conley, and seconded by Commissioner Fernando, that the Resolution be adopted. The motion passed.

WHEREAS, Hennepin County has been a leader on solid waste policy in response to the environmental concerns with landfills and with the establishment of the Minnesota Waste Management Act in 1980, with each decade focused on a significant improvement toward meeting the goal to reduce waste and our reliance on landfills; and

WHEREAS, the 1980s included piloting recycling programs in Minneapolis, adopting the county's recycling ordinance (Ordinance 13) in 1986, making curbside recycling available throughout the county; the 1980s also included responding to the state requirement that metropolitan counties submit plans for facilities that would process waste rather than disposing of it in landfills, which resulted in the siting and permitting of the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) with the City of Minneapolis, which began operations in 1989; and the county implemented waste flow designation that requires all haulers to deliver trash to be processed rather than landfilled; and

WHEREAS, the 1990s included a focus on removing hazardous items from the trash with the opening of the county's drop-off facilities in Brooklyn Park and Bloomington and first of its kind collections of e-waste and fluorescent light bulbs; and the state began distributing solid waste management tax revenues as SCORE grants to counties to fund recycling and waste abatement work, and early waste reduction education programs launched, and the last landfill in the county closed in 1993; and the U.S. Supreme Court overturned local flow control ordinances, which shifted the county to contract with waste haulers for trash deliveries to HERC; and

WHEREAS, the 2000s focused on diverting food waste with the county selling backyard compost bins, piloting citywide organics recycling in Wayzata and 21 suburban schools, and the county began providing grants to support recycling programs in schools, businesses, multifamily properties and public spaces; and

WHEREAS, in the 2010s further expansion of waste reduction programming, including the start of the Community Recycling Ambassador program, Fix-it Clinics and the Zero Waste Challenge; in 2014, the state set a recycling rate goal of 75% by 2030 for metropolitan counties and no-sort recycling programs became the norm; in 2018 the county amended its recycling ordinance 13 to require all cities offer organics recycling programs to their residents; require large food waste generators to recycle food waste and strengthened

requirements for multifamily and commercial recycling; and

WHEREAS, in 2021 the county committed to achieving a zero-waste future and defined zero waste as preventing 90% or more of all discarded materials from being landfilled or incinerated; and

WHEREAS, the county has followed through on this commitment with increased investments in policy, programming and infrastructure as documented in the creation of the Zero Waste Plan in 2023, a prioritization of the highest impact zero-waste actions in the Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System in 2024, and culminated in the county's 2024 Solid Waste Management Plan as required by Minnesota Statute § 473.803; and

WHEREAS, the county has established dashboard metrics for tracking progress toward the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's metro policy plan objectives; the county's zero-waste goal and the criteria to be met to responsibly close HERC, including a 75% recycling rate, less than 10% biogenic material in the trash, a 22% reduction in waste generated per capita, and no net increase in landfilling over 2022 actuals; and

WHEREAS, the county has committed resources to the implementation of zero waste by increasing the 2024 waste reduction and recycling budget by \$2.8 million, including hiring new staff, to expand existing programs and develop new initiatives that prioritize reducing materials with the greatest climate impacts such as food, plastics, and building materials, and to address long-standing disparities in access to recycling and organics services, especially in multifamily settings; and

WHEREAS, the City of Minneapolis is the largest city in the county and the county cannot reach its zero-waste goals or the 75% statutory recycling rate unless the city also achieves those goals; and

WHEREAS, the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan, policy 75, Waste Reduction, identifies 22 actions steps that the city will take to maintain and expand opportunities to reduce and properly dispose of waste to meet the city's zero-waste goals; and

WHEREAS, the City of Minneapolis' Climate Equity Plan, identifies 31 actions to advance a zero-waste circular economy and reaffirms its goals to achieve a zero-percent growth rate in its total waste stream from 2010 levels by 2030, and to recycle and compost 80% of citywide waste by 2030; and

WHEREAS, the county and the City of Minneapolis have a long history of collaboration on solid waste management, including the establishment of the first curbside recycling collection program in the state, electronics and mattress recycling initiatives, the Recycle Smart campaign to reduce contamination, the rollout of the organics recycling program, joint efforts to conduct waste composition studies, and continuous collaboration on education and outreach efforts; and

WHEREAS, the county required the City of Minneapolis to provide single sort recycling in July 2011 and organics recycling in October 2014 and the city successfully implemented

those requirements; and

WHEREAS, the county provided funding to the City of Minneapolis in 2024 in the amount of \$1.7 million in SCORE funding, including more than \$215,000 for multifamily recycling, and an additional \$150,000 to support organics processing, and made available \$1,275,000 in grant funding countywide for schools, businesses, multifamily properties, community groups, food recovery, and deconstruction projects; and

WHEREAS, more than 60% of material in Minneapolis residential trash can be recycled or composted, as found in the 2022 Minneapolis Waste Characterization & Capture Rate Study; and

WHEREAS, approximately 65% of the trash generated in Minneapolis comes from the “commercial, institutional and multifamily” sector, and the recycling rates for that sector are unknown, creating a critical data gap that makes it difficult to evaluate performance and establish feedback loops that inform policy decisions, program adjustments, and the allocation of resources; and

WHEREAS, the county’s 2023 zero-waste engagement and analysis found gaps in the current system and identified the most impactful strategies for implementing zero waste as quickly as possible in the City of Minneapolis, including: 1) improve hauler reporting, 2) increase compliance with existing ordinances, 3) advance organized collection, 4) improve curbside recycling and organics participation, and 5) track progress annually on Climate Equity Plan zero-waste goals; and

WHEREAS, the county has a Plan to Reinvent the County’s Solid Waste System to accelerate closure and repurposing of the HERC, which establishes a zero-waste dashboard with criteria to be met to responsibly close HERC and identifies 22 policies that need to be adopted by the State Legislature to realize this zero-waste future and this plan builds on the county’s Climate Action Plan and Zero Waste Plan; and

WHEREAS, state law requires the county to comply with landfill abatement policies, which currently prioritize waste-to-energy as a means of processing trash, over landfilling; and

WHEREAS, state leadership is needed to make the transition to zero waste, including financing to match desired outcomes, changing state statutes to support the shift away from disposal and toward a circular economy, expanding accountability for zero waste outcomes to include producer responsibility, redeveloping infrastructure to meet state waste reduction and recycling goals, and supporting markets to adapt to changing demands; and

WHEREAS, the City of Minneapolis Resolution No. 2024R-360 supports a plan for closure of the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) and will facilitate such a closure through implementing solid waste diversion and reduction measures as quickly as possible; and

WHEREAS, accelerating progress toward zero waste county-wide is not possible without more implementation by the City of Minneapolis on these strategies.

**Resolution:**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Minneapolis report the city's recycling rates, using the county's methodology for reporting to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency including rates for (1) residential curbside program (2) the commercial, institutional, and multifamily sector, and (3) the overall recycling rates for 2024 or report the necessary steps to collect and report commercial, institutional, multifamily sector data in collaboration with the county if the data is not currently available; establish annual targets through 2030 in collaboration with the county; report on compliance rates with existing ordinances, specifically the Green to Go and Recycling at Commercial Buildings ordinances, and establish annual targets through 2030, or report the necessary steps to collect and report compliance rates with existing ordinances, if the data is not currently available; build on the city's 2017 Commercial Waste Evaluation Study by establishing a date to initiate the statutory process outlined in Minn. Stat. sec. 115A.94 to implement organized commercial, institutional, and multifamily collection of recycling, organics, and trash; set capture rate targets by material type for 2030 in collaboration with the county; identify necessary resources and a timeline that address the county's 4 priorities for the city and the Food and Zero Waste Circular Economy actions FZW.3.2, FZW.3.3, FZW.3.4, FZW.4.3, FZW.5.2, FZW.5.3, and FZW.5.4 from the Climate Equity Plan by providing specific steps for implementation including key tasks, timelines, responsibilities and measurable outcomes on a bi-annual basis beginning with 2026-2027, with a reporting mechanism provided to the county; and submit this information to the Board no later than October 20, 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the county's Residential Waste Reduction and Recycling Funding Policy, which determines the county's distribution of SCORE funding to cities, be revised to include requirements for cities of the first class, including measurable performance standards for local abatement of solid waste through waste reduction and recycling programs, standards and procedures to be used in determining annually whether the city has implemented and satisfied the performance standards for local abatement, and whether the city's policies and programs are consistent with state policy and purposes as outlined in Minn. Stat. §§ 115A.02, 115A.551 and Minn. Stat. §§ 473.842 to 473.849.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, nothing in this action shall be construed as a directive to close the HERC prematurely on a timeline that would increase landfilling, and that any decisions regarding facility closure will be subject to a separate process with engagement of impacted stakeholders, including cities throughout the county; and the county re-affirms its commitment in the 2024 Solid Waste Management Plan to engage in efficient and value-added infrastructure planning (required strategy 11) and develop plans for large facility closures to reduce landfill reliance (required strategy 12) as described in the Metro Solid Waste Policy Plan pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 473.149, subd. 2d to abate landfilling.

**Background:** Hennepin County has been a leader on solid waste policy, programming and infrastructure implementation since the 1980s. Most recently, in 2021, the board defined a zero-waste vision and a commitment to preventing 90% or more of all discarded materials from being landfilled or incinerated. That vision is supported by the county's 2023 zero waste plan, the plan to reinvent the solid waste system, and the 2024 solid waste management plan.

The county recently reviewed progress on the 12 highest impact actions and the zero-waste dashboard metrics. The county has followed through on our zero-waste commitment with increased investments in policy, programming, and infrastructure. Meaningful progress has been made in the areas the county directly influences, but overall progress has been incremental.

Success depends on alignment across the system and each partner doing their part. The county has called for greater accountability from state leaders and cities - especially the largest city - Minneapolis. Hennepin County cannot achieve its zero-waste goals without Minneapolis implementing their zero waste plans.

In August 2024, Board Chair Fernando and county leadership presented to the Minneapolis City Council the most impactful strategies for implementing zero waste as quickly as possible in the city, including 4 priorities: (1) improve hauler reporting, (2) increase compliance with existing ordinances, (3) advance organized collection for commercial/multifamily sector waste, and (4) improve curbside recycling and organics participation.

In October 2024, Minneapolis passed a resolution to support the closure of HERC by December 31, 2027. The city's resolution states that the city will implement diversion and reduction measures as quickly as possible and develop methods to track progress toward zero-waste goals. In the past year, limited progress has been made on these commitments.

This board action is brought by the Administration in response to ongoing conversations with Hennepin County cities, especially the City of Minneapolis, the recent review of the annual recycling progress report, and the climate action board briefing in July 2025. This board action is compliant with state statutes and the county's solid waste management plan. The resolving clauses are actions to increase accountability for Minneapolis by requiring the city to set targets and develop plans to implement these most impactful strategies to advance climate action and zero waste goals. The resolving clause references the following City of Minneapolis 2023 Climate Equity Plan, from the Food and Zero Waste Circular Economy actions:

Action FZW.3.2. By 2027, make it mandatory for City serviced properties to participate in the recycling program

Action FZW.3.3. Multifamily requirements by 2028

Action FZW.3.4. Actively enforce recycling at all residential and commercial buildings and food establishments by any and all City inspectors authorized to perform enforcement activities (CPED, Regulatory Services, Health Department, and Solid Waste & Recycling).

Action FZW.4.3. Update the Green to Go ordinance requirements (Chapter 204-Title 10) in 2023 or 2024 to further restrict distribution of unnecessary oil-based single-use plastics. Pair the update with continued education/ enforcement for businesses around the ordinance. Focus outreach and assistance in the Minneapolis Cultural Districts and with BIPOC owned restaurants in transitioning to

non-foam, non-plastic products. Support for restaurants may come from the Minneapolis Small Business Team, Environmental Health, business-serving organizations, and neighborhood organizations.

Action FZW.5.2. Evaluate mandatory organics program participation for City serviced properties to start in 2040.

Action FZW.5.3. By 2025, allocate resources and hire a consultant to research organics recycling programs in multi-units in efforts to develop a minimum threshold requirement for when landlords are required to provide organics to their tenants

Action FZW.5.4. By 2025, support Hennepin County Ordinance 13 requirements by adopting an ordinance requiring certain food generators to divert food scraps from the trash. Provide additional resources and support to come into compliance.

The board action also revises the county's residential waste reduction and recycling funding policy. This policy determines how the county allocates approximately \$4 million in state SCORE funds to cities each year. Cities must spend the funds on residential waste reduction and recycling programs, in the following categories and the funding by city is determined with the formulas provided in policy for each of these priority efforts, including: 1) general funding for waste reduction and recycling programs; 2) curbside organics recycling programs; 3) organics drop-off sites; and 4) multifamily waste reduction and recycling. The City of Minneapolis receives approximately \$1.4 million in 2025 for their residential recycling programs. The funding policy is published at [Hennepin.us/solidwasteplanning](https://hennepin.us/solidwasteplanning).

### **Current Request**

This request requires the city to set targets, track and report on progress, take action on priorities, and develop a work plan to implement the most impactful strategies to make progress toward climate action and zero waste goals.

The request also revises the county's residential waste reduction and recycling funding policy to allow measurable performance standards be applied to cities of the first class in determining whether the city has satisfied standards to receive annual distribution of SCORE funds.

### **Impact/Outcomes**

This action accelerates zero-waste implementation and increases accountability for City of Minneapolis. The county cannot reach its zero-waste goals unless the city also achieves those goals. The outcomes will address gaps in the current system and support the implementation of the most impactful strategies in the City of Minneapolis, including: improve hauler reporting, increase compliance with existing ordinances, advance organized commercial/multifamily waste collection, improve curbside recycling and organics results, and track progress annually on 7 Climate Equity Plan zero-waste actions .

RESOLUTION ADOPTED ON 9/9/2025

The question was on the adoption of the resolution with the votes as follows:

**Aye:** 6 Commissioner Fernando, Commissioner Greene, Commissioner Conley, Commissioner Edelson, Commissioner Anderson, and Commissioner Goettel

**Absent:** 1 Commissioner Lunde

**Maria Rose**



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Maria Rose