

RESOLUTION

Board of Hennepin County Commissioners

RESOLUTION: 26-0062

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

WHEREAS, Hennepin County engaged thousands of residents and businesses, as well as city staff, elected officials, waste haulers and environmental advocacy organizations to shape our vision for a zero-waste future for more than 4 years; and

WHEREAS, this engagement, research and deliberation led to a significant body of ambitious zero-waste policy work: the Zero Waste Plan in June 2023, the Report on HERC and its Role in the Solid Waste System in September 2023, A Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System in February 2024, all of which culminated in the 2024 Solid Waste Management Plan that was adopted by the county board in October 2024 and approved by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency in November 2025; and

WHEREAS, the county's Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System to achieve zero waste and accelerate closure and repurposing of the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC), which includes a plan for implementation for the county and its partners to achieve zero-waste and establishes a zero-waste dashboard with criteria to be met to responsibly close HERC between 2028 and 2040; and

WHEREAS, the county took action by committing resources to the implementation of zero waste by increasing waste reduction and recycling budget and hiring new staff to expand existing programs and new initiatives developed from community needs and priorities, such as reducing materials with the greatest climate impacts such as food, plastics, and building materials, and address long-standing disparities in access to recycling and organics services, especially in multifamily settings; and

WHEREAS, the county has made progress in the areas that the county has the most control: including policies like amending Ordinance 13 and increasing compliance with these food waste diversion and recycling requirements; programming like expanding technical assistance to multifamily properties, businesses, schools and cities to improve their waste prevention and recycling programs, implementing a first of its kind waste food prevention plan and the Trash or Cash food waste prevention campaign and plastic-free and other zero-waste challenges for residents; and expanding infrastructure, including expanding organics drop-offs and exploring recycling recovery facilities; and

WHEREAS, more work is needed because while we have made incremental progress we are still collectively discarding more than 700,000 tons of trash each year, enough to fill Target Field from the field to the top of the stands 6 times, and more specifically the trash produced by Minneapolis residents and businesses every month would fill Nicollet Avenue - curb to curb, 6 feet deep - from downtown to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park at S. 42nd St; and even with an incredibly

optimistic view of how fast and how well we can implement the highest impact zero-waste actions, we still have a lot of trash to dispose while advancing zero-waste actions and significant changes in waste management policy, systems, and individual behaviors are needed to meet that goal; and

WHEREAS, this is a heavy lift - The county has done the easy things, and the easy things took time; the diversion rate achieved by long-time zero-waste leaders ranges from 50% to 60% and the defining factors for these high performing leaders are state-level zero-waste policies and higher level of control over the solid waste system; and

WHEREAS, everyone needs to play a role to reinvent the solid waste system because achieving zero-waste is only possible with aligned goals and actions, shared responsibility and mutual accountability with partners.

Resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED, Hennepin County is committed to accelerating progress toward zero waste, which the county has defined as preventing 90% or more of all discarded materials from being landfilled or incinerated; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the county board reaffirms its Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System to achieve zero waste and accelerate closure and repurposing of the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC), which includes an implementation plan for the county and its partners to achieve zero-waste; the 22 state legislative actions needed; the zero-waste dashboard with criteria to be met to responsibly close HERC between 2028 and 2040 and the key sequence of operational steps that would need to be completed to stop incinerating trash at HERC; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the county board re-affirms the zero-waste dashboard that defines the criteria to be met to responsibly close HERC as having four metrics - recycling rate, percent of food and other biogenic materials in the trash, waste generated per capita, and landfill rate - that the county tracks and reports on annually; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the county's position is to accelerate the closure and repurposing of HERC by aggressively pursuing zero-waste policies, programming, and infrastructure because the county's climate and equity commitments mean we cannot depend on landfills to manage our trash so we must reinvent the solid waste system; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the county cannot achieve zero waste alone - the county seeks shared responsibility and mutual accountability to make zero-waste a reality, and this responsibility begins at the top with state leadership on policies, funding and infrastructure development that matches the scope of the challenges and the ambition of the goals; and change can only be driven by growing and aligning a base of many more residents, businesses and environmental advocates to get involved, drive support for a zero-waste future, and participate in actions that realize that vision; and

BE IT FURTHER RESLOVED, the county board calls upon the Minnesota Legislature to lead policy efforts that advance 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

BE IT FURTHER RESLOVED, the county board calls on cities and the solid waste industry to lean

in on greater collaboration and investment to drive and implement these policies and objectives;
and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the county board calls on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to lead by holding all members of the solid waste system accountable for meeting goals, oversee implementation of producer responsibility laws, streamline permitting, lead market development efforts, and do more to enforce state laws; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, with these dependencies met, the county and its partners will realize a zero-waste future that is rooted in a circular economy and an equitable system, that allows us to stop trashing our valuable resources and responsibly close HERC.

Recommendation from County Administrator: No Recommendation

RESOLUTION ADOPTED ON 2/12/2026

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

Aye: 5 Commissioner Fernando, Commissioner Goettel, Commissioner Greene, Commissioner Conley, and Commissioner Edelson

Absent: 2 Commissioner Lunde, and Commissioner Anderson

Maria Rose



Maria Rose