



# Office of the City Clerk

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## Legislation Text

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**File #:** R2020-164, **Version:** 1

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Committee on Environmental Protection & Energy  
February 19, 2020 City Council  
Meeting

### **RESOLUTION CALLING FOR SUBJECT-MATTER HEARINGS ON RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING SERVICES**

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago's Department of Streets & Sanitation (DSS) manages waste collection for approximately 600,000 households, including single-family homes up to 4-unit residential buildings; and ■'

WHEREAS, In 2007, the City of Chicago introduced the Blue Cart Recycling program in seven communities and expanded the program to all eligible households in 2013; and

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago uses a single-stream recycling system in which all recyclable materials are collected and transported together. Recyclables are picked up and transported every other week in designated recycling trucks to avoid contamination; and

WHEREAS, Property owners of multi-unit residential buildings of five or more units, as well as office and commercial establishments, are mandated to provide source-separated, single-stream recycling and are responsible for implementing an ongoing educational program including posting signage and providing adequate recycling carts; and

WHEREAS, The Office of the Inspector General announced in the Audit and Program Review Section of its 2020 Annual Plan that it would evaluate whether the city's Department of Streets & Sanitation is enforcing the municipal code provisions requiring high-density residential and commercial buildings to procure recycling services; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, the City of Chicago's Department of the Environment (DOE) released a waste characterization study based on information for the year 2007. The study detailed the quantity, sources, and composition of the City's waste stream. The study showed that the City generated approximately 7.3 million tons of waste every year, 45% of which is diverted from landfills. The diversion rate for residential buildings with Streets and Sanitation collection was 8%, while it was 19% for residential buildings with private collection and 65% for construction and demolition; and

WHEREAS, According to the 2010 waste characterization study, compostable organics such as food and yard waste comprised 29% of the City of Chicago's total waste; and

WHEREAS, Less than 1% of eligible city households utilize 311 to request that DSS pickup their yard waste, despite the existence of a 1990 Illinois state law that prohibits yard waste from being disposed of in landfills; and

WHEREAS, In 2011, the City of Chicago disbanded DOE; and

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago created a managed competition program in 2011 in which the City was split into six recycling zones, with DSS serving two zones and two private companies (Waste Management and Sims Midwest Metal Management) serving the remaining four zones; and

WHEREAS, DSS last published Blue Cart recycling and yard waste diversion rates in July 2018. In that year, DSS found that the City of Chicago's recycling rate was less than 9%, and its yard waste diversion rate was 0%; and

WHEREAS, A 2019 investigation by the Better Government Association (BGA) concluded that at least 577,886 recycling bins were labeled "grossly contaminated" with improper items, meaning they were not diverted from landfills; and

WHEREAS, The BGA report concluded that 514,239 of those recycling bins (approximately 90%) were tagged by workers affiliated with Waste Management; and

WHEREAS, the BGA report concluded that Chicago 9% recycling rate is the lowest of any major U.S. municipality, nearly half the rate of second-place Houston (17%); and

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago has twice extended its recycling contract with Waste Management without a transparent request for bids process; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the City of Chicago implemented a \$9.50/month garbage and recycling tax for eligible residential properties; and

WHEREAS, In January 2020, Mayor Lori Lightfoot ordered DSS to conduct a study of existing recycling and waste management practices; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, hereby call upon the Committee on Environmental Protection & Energy to hold subject-matter hearings on the following issues:

1. The efficacy of residential and commercial recycling services provided by DSS, Waste Management, and Sims Midwest Metal Management;
2. The efficacy of yard waste disposal services provided by DSS;
3. Existing options for composting food waste; and
4. Methods that other municipalities utilize to more effectively manage and reduce their recyclable and compostable waste.