Statement on Road to Zero Waste Goals and the Community Organics Recycling Program

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In 2013 the City of Fort Collins adopted the forward-thinking goal of attaining zero waste by 2030 through reduction, recycling, composting and diversion as a key component of its Climate Action Plan. With 3.9% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Fort Collins currently coming from solid waste and our landfill scheduled for closure in 2025, Fort Collins needs to expedite implementation of strategies to achieve its Road to Zero Waste and Climate Action Plan goals.

At its work session on May 23rd, City Council is being asked to provide feedback to staff on three separate potential actions:

1. Modify Drake Water Reclamation Facility (DWRF) to accept pre-processed food scraps,
2. Create a publicly-owned organic waste transfer station, and
3. Facilitate/support a privately-owned organic waste transfer station.

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) recommends that of those three options, City Council direct staff to further investigate a publicly owned organic waste transfer station. Additionally, we recommend that Council support bundling of residential composting services and requiring mandatory food waste composting for restaurants to maximize the amount of material sent to the transfer station.

While modifying the DWRF to accept food waste offers the greatest GHG emissions reductions of the options presented in the work session item, city staff has consistently told the FCSG for the past several years that the resulting biosolids would be mixed in with biosolids produced from the general sewage stream. These biosolids – contaminated with whatever else in addition to food and human waste goes into the sewer – would then be spread on rangeland north of the City. The FCSG cannot support this approach. Unless the food waste can be kept separate from the general sewage stream at the DWRF, this option should be rejected as being fundamentally unsustainable. In addition, even with the modification proposed, the DWRF would not have the capacity to handle the combined organic material from residences and restaurants, so other options for dealing with the excess organics would be required.

It would likely take more time to build a privately-funded organic waste transfer station than a publicly-funded one. Every year that we wait to address the problem of organic waste adds another 16.8 – 23.5 thousand tons of organic material to the landfill and increases GHG emissions by 8.1 – 19.7 thousand metric tons CO2(e) The FCSG therefore supports moving forward as soon as possible with a publicly-funded organic waste transfer station. – unless a privately funded one could be built more quickly. A transfer station would allow the greatest spectrum of organic material to be processed and is also the option supported by the City's private waste haulers.

Food waste and yard trimmings taken to a publicly funded transfer station could then be transported to A-1 Organics in Keenesburg to be composted without mixing in other wastes. By the time the transfer station is completed, other options for composting food waste and yard trimmings may be available that

are closer than Keenesburg – which would reduce GHG emissions still further than the amount shown in the work session item for that option.

Finally, bundling composting services with trash would be similar to the City's recycling program that 97% of Fort Collins residents currently participate in. According to the work session item, household waste contains on average 47% compostable materials. Restaurant waste contains on average 68% compostable materials. It is important that as much of this waste as possible be diverted from the general waste stream and be composted in order to meet the City's Road to Zero Waste and Climate Action Plan goals.