

Council seals fate of Nelson Gardens S.A. to use private landfill for now

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City Council officially voted Thursday to close Nelson Gardens municipal landfill, and authorized more than \$2 million in contracts for work associated with shutting down the Southwest Side facility.

But the council didn't decide which private company or companies will provide landfill services for the next five years while the city searches for a 2,000-acre regional landfill site.

Public Works Director John German said he and his staff will continue negotiating with three private firms to obtain the lowest rate possible.

German said he expected to have a proposal for the council's review next week.

Although the council ordered the landfill closed by Oct. 9 to avoid performing environmental work estimated to cost as much as \$10 million to comply with federal regulations, Nelson Gardens is to stop accepting trash next week so city and contract crews can put a proper covering on the landfill.

In the meantime, the city will rely on an existing contract with Browning-Ferris Industries to deposit trash at that company's Tessman Road landfill in eastern Bexar County.

Council members said they weren't concerned that a week's delay in selecting a private contractor will jeopardize the Oct. 9 closure deadline. "We want to get the best deal for the ratepayers," said Council man Henry Avila, in whose district Nelson Gardens is located.

The city staff is negotiating with BFI, Waste Management Inc. and Texas Disposal Systems of Austin. Avila said he welcomed the competition and is leaning in favor of awarding a contract to at least two of the firms.

Councilman Howard Peak agreed, saying: "I don't want to get tied in with just one company. I would like to be flexible." To close Nelson Gardens, the city must file a plan with the new Texas Natural Resource and Conservation Commission, formerly known as the Texas Water Commission.

The top of the landfill also must be covered with a 2-foot clay liner and 6 inches of topsoil, German said. City crews will do some of the work, but most of it will be performed by employees of H.B. Zachry Co. under a \$2 million contract approved by the council.

German said about 600,000 cubic yards of dirt will have to be moved in 30 days to complete the task, and he recommended Zachry because of the company's experience in landfill construction.

Some of the dirt required for the top layer of the landfill is to come from the adjacent Covell Gardens landfill under construction by Zachry for Waste Management German said.

Supervising the work will be Raba-Kistner Inc., the engineering firm that was awarded a contract by the council in 1991 to apply for a state permit to expand Nelson Gardens.

Since the resource and conservation commission didn't appear likely to grant that permit, the council voted informally last week not to assume the estimated \$10 million in additional environmental costs to keep Nelson Gardens open.

German said the Raba-Kistner contract was for \$128,000, an amount he will negotiate to be reduced.

If no agreement on a lower rate can be reached, German said he will turn to another firm familiar with Nelson Gardens.

People accustomed to depositing trash at the landfill will have one more weekend to do so before the facility closes, German said.

"We are telling people to come on out this weekend if they have anything to throw away.

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