

Remarks to Mayor and Council on June 11, 2007

My name is Art Stigile, and I live at 312 W Edmonston Dr.

First I want to thank Council member Dorsey for his statement at the last citizen's forum that we can "disagree without being disagreeable." We should post it right above the clock, as a reminder to all of us that our comments would be much more effective if we would skip the pot shots at Council and staff, and use our 3 minutes to discuss the issues and potential solutions.

Switching to my favorite issue, I was disappointed by the discussion at the last Council meeting of the \$1.70 increase in the trash rate. If we want the same service, we have to pay the higher costs. If we keep the fee constant, the City will have to pay the cost using other funds. You better get used to approving large increases, because Staff projections show that, without a change in service, the cost will double in about 10 years. I would note that even with the \$1.70 increase, you are dipping into the fund reserve by \$186,000.

Council member Dorsey talked about adjusting the knobs on the budget. For trash, the main knobs are frequency of service and volume of trash. Frequency directly impacts labor expense, which accounts for more than half of the trash budget. The only practical way to cut labor expense is to go to once-per-week service. Tipping fees are probably the next largest budget item, and you've probably done all that you can by approving the large recycling cans and going to single stream recycling, which hopefully will encourage greater recycling.

The budget math is clear. The problem is that the political arithmetic doesn't add. We need to go to once per week service, if we are serious about restraining future costs increases, but you have a lot of concern about the reaction of voters. On that point, I would refer to my table, which shows that a substantial number of homes in Twinbrook already do not bother to use twice per week service.

In my survey, about one-quarter of homes do not set out trash on the first pickup day of the week, and about two-thirds do not set it out on the second pickup day. I think those numbers suggest that the political hurdle may not be as great as everyone fears, if we are willing to show some leadership and engage residents in a dialog about costs and options.

Thank you, and I'd be happy to answer questions about my survey.