

Staff Report

Report To: Operations Committee
Report From: Heidi Jennen, Supervisor of Environmental Services
Meeting Date: March 16, 2023
Report Code: OP-23-007
Subject: Leaf and Yard Waste Compost Site – Interim Control and Security

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report OP-23-007 respecting Leaf and Yard Waste Compost Site – Interim Control and Security, the Operations Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to bring forward by-laws to:

1. Amend Waste Management By-law No. 2005-151, Schedule “H”, Leaf and Yard Waste Composting Program, as follows:
 - a. Delete section 1.2 and replace it with:

“Brush, Branches, Logs and Stumps shall be defined as the remains of woody plants, trees, and shrubs and shall include logs and stumps up to 15cm (6 inches) in diameter and free of soil and rocks.”; and
 - b. Remove Section 3, Commercial Use, in its entirety; and
2. Amend Appointed Officers By-law No. 2015-054, Schedule “D”, Appointed Municipal Law Enforcement Officers, to appoint Thomas Wheildon as a By-law Enforcement Officer authorized to enforce Waste Management By-law No. 2005-151 at the City’s Leaf and Yard Waste Compost Site.

Highlights:

- Expenses associated with wood grinding have significantly risen in recent years.
- Staff will bring forward a report to Committee later this year outlining a business plan to address the future operations of the leaf and yard waste compost site.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

Previous Report/Authority:

None.

Background:

The Leaf and Yard Waste Compost site opened to residents of Owen Sound in 2004. It has become increasingly popular, drawing in leaf and yard waste contributors from City residents, commercial operators, and sources outside the City. As a result of this increase in use, operating costs have risen significantly in recent years, with operating expenses nearly doubling since 2018.

Leaf and Yard Waste Compost Site

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Wages	\$33,255	\$31,203	\$57,103	\$46,338	\$43,490
Contractor Payments	\$6,000	\$44,838	\$11,430	\$84,391	\$66,823
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$45,585	\$46,678	\$53,242	\$33,487	\$44,692
Total	\$84,840	\$122,719	\$121,775	\$164,216	\$155,005

Miscellaneous expenses include equipment rental and lease, tipping fees, materials and supplies

These costs are related to various factors, including the time and effort of Public Works staff to maintain the site, equipment rental and removal costs and tipping fees for disposing of materials that cannot be processed at the

site, and contractor payments for grinding tree stumps and logs. In 2022, the costs associated with the site were approximately \$155,000.

In the past year, there were three fires at the site that the Owen Sound Fire Services attended. These fires were believed to be caused by ashes being dumped at the site.

This year, to minimize the site use during the off-season, the leaf and yard compost site was closed from January 16, with an expected re-opening on Saturday, April 1, 2023, or later if winter weather prevents safe access.

Schedule "H" to [Waste Management By-law No 2005-151](#) – Leaf and Yard Waste Composting Program

The by-law defines the type of waste accepted at the site:

1.1. Leaves and plant material produced on lawns and gardens, excluding kitchen waste and brush, branches, logs, and stumps.

1.2. Brush, Branches, Logs, and Stumps shall be defined as the remains of woody plants, trees, and shrubs and shall include logs and stumps to 60 cm (24 inches) in diameter, root balls up to 150 cm (60 inches) in diameter and free of soil and rocks.

1.3. Sod is defined as the grass mat and attached topsoil removed from domestic lawns' upper 5 cm (2 inches).

Section 3 of Schedule 'H' of the Waste Management By-Law states:

3.1 Effective July 1, 2005, only Commercial contractors shall deposit Brush, Branches, Logs, and Stumps at the Leaf and Yard Waste Composting Site if they have paid the fees described in the waste management fees By-Law.

Section 4 of Schedule 'H' of the Waste Management By-Law states:

4.1 No person from outside the City shall deposit any material at the Leaf and Yard Waste Composting Site unless their originating municipality has entered into a cost-sharing agreement with the City.

Surrounding Municipalities' Leaf and Yard Waste sites

Currently, the Municipality of Meaford leaf and yard waste depot, located at 157859 7th Line in Meaford, runs from April to November and is open Fridays from 12 pm to 5 pm and Saturdays from 9 am to 2 pm. The Municipality of Meaford leaf and yard waste depot accepts yard waste, including leaves,

grass, weeds, sawdust, woodchips, plants, small shrubs, brush, and branches up to 15 cm (6 in.) in diameter, and accepts material from residential and commercial activities. The site's management is overseen by staff, and residential materials can be taken to the site free of charge. The fees and charges by-law stipulate that commercial entities are subject to fees of \$20 and \$35 for small and large loads, respectively. The fees at the site are waived for commercial businesses from October 1 until the end of the season.

The Township of Georgian Bluffs does not offer a leaf and yard waste facility but does encourage residents to set up and manage compost in their backyards at home. Earth Machine composters and Green Cone Digesters are available for purchase at the Township office.

The Township of Chatsworth does not offer a leaf and yard waste facility.

Analysis:

Staff will be undertaking the following interim measures while a fulsome business case is done:

1. Posting clear and visible signage at the entrance and within the site to inform visitors of site access policies and accepted materials.
2. Launch an awareness campaign to educate residents on what can and cannot be disposed of at the site, including social media posts, a dedicated webpage or upgrading the current website, and media advisories.
3. Restricting the use of the site to residential leaf and yard waste only. Commercial operators may be required to provide proof of residential-only work within the City limits to use the site; this could include providing documentation such as a quote or an invoice for the project.
4. Redefining Brush, Branches, Logs, and Stumps. Currently defined as "the remains of woody plants, trees, and shrubs and shall include logs and stumps to 60 cm (24 inches) in diameter, root balls up to 150 cm (60 inches)", this could be amended to only accept small shrubs, brush, and branches up to 15 cm (6 in.) in diameter. Further reductions could be considered in the future business plan pending the effect of this initial change.

5. Installing counters at the entrance of the leaf and yard waste compost site for the 2023 season to track how many vehicles are entering the site and identify the busy periods.
6. Reduce the hours of operation of the site to the period of approximately mid-April to mid-January each year (open 40 weeks/year) with the following open hours during the week:
 - Monday, Wednesday, and Friday – 4 hours – 8 a.m. to 12 noon
 - Tuesday and Thursday – 4 hours – 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.
 - Saturdays – 5 hours – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
 - The site would be closed on Sundays and Statutory Holidays and would close for the season in mid-January. Keeping the site open until mid-January allows for Christmas tree drop-off until that time.

Public Works staff can work more efficiently, safely, and freely when the site is closed to the public. Saturday attendance, if required, would be less costly, especially during the winter control period when staff are working a scheduled shift but have no winter weather events to attend to.

7. Additional personnel will be stationed periodically at the site during operational hours during the 2023 season (to September 30th). The City has a contract with Fairmount Security Services and the compost site will be added to their existing contract. Staff are recommending that CEO, Thomas Wheildon of Fairmount Security Services, be provided authority to enforce the Waste Management By-law at the compost site should a matter escalate, and a ticket needs to be written. This will avoid the need to call Police Services. The equivalent of four weeks in security coverage cost for the 2023 season has been allocated to this purpose, but the security personnel scheduling may not be consecutive and will be used to collect as much data as possible.
8. Staff will investigate the possibility of installing cameras at the site entrance to enforce penalties for illegal dumping outside regular operating hours. This is proposed as a measure to be assessed in more detail as part of the business case for the yard waste site, as the reduction in hours and other proposed actions may reduce the

unauthorized use to a manageable level, skewing the cost-benefit analysis and ruling out further and more expensive solutions.

Depending on the effectiveness of the current suite of proposed solutions, any more complex or expensive initiatives, such as surveillance cameras or staffing, can be brought forward in the Leaf and Yard Waste Site Business Plan to Committee and Council and for consideration in the 2024 operating budget.

Financial Implications:

The City has budgeted \$131,500 to operate the Leaf and Yard Waste Compost Site in 2023. The operating budget for the site is 100 per cent supported by the tax levy.

The financial impacts of implementing several of the proposed initiatives are yet to be determined as the implementation details have not yet been developed. As costs are determined, appropriate purchasing procedures will be followed, seeking approval from Committee/Council as may be required.

The estimated expense for gate security is \$4,000, which is expected to be offset by the anticipated decrease in grinding costs.

Vehicle counters are expected to cost less than \$1,000 and can be redeployed in other locations, if needed.

The cost of signage is estimated to be \$2,500.

The above costs can be accommodated within the existing Operating Budget.

Communication Strategy:

1. Media Advisory and social media posts issued upon reopening the site a minimum of one week before the reopening advising of the new hours and reminding residents that the site is only for Owen Sound residents' use and what materials are accepted at the site.
2. Clear signage posted at the site to inform visitors of the site's policies, operating hours, and accepted materials.
3. Reminder letters to surrounding municipalities to inform them that the site is for Owen Sound residents' use only.

4. Additional information, including leaf and yard waste compost site hours and a list of what is accepted at the compost site, can be found at [Waste Management - Owen Sound](#).

Consultation:

Director of Public Works and Engineering, Manager of Public Works, Public Works Superintendent, Public Works Administrative Assistant, Public Works Patrol Coordinator, Manager of Engineering Services and Fairmount Security Services staff were consulted in the preparation of this report.

Attachments:

Photographic evidence of illegal dumping.

Recommended by:

Lara Widdifield, Director of Public Works and Engineering

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Heidi Jennen, Supervisor of Environmental Services, at hjennen@owensound.ca or 519-376-1440 ext. 3223.