



City of Saint Paul

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Minutes - Final

Legislative Hearings

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Thursday, July 29, 2021

9:00 AM

Remote

Special Tax Assessments

9:00 a.m. Hearings

- 1 **RLH TA 21-314** Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 696 CONCORD STREET. (File No. CG2102A1, Assessment No. 210106)

Sponsors: Noecker

Approve the assessment.

No one appeared in person (testimony submitted via email)

Staff report by Clare Pillsbury: the property owner stated they don't receive any garbage service. They believe they are being defrauded by the program and caused financial hardship. Under Citywide garbage service all residential properties are required to have a cart with no option to opt out. The property owner is responsible for the outstanding charge. We do want to note they have the lowest level of service. In response to his complaints about service in his email, we will be investigating his claims of poor service including having seven carts and missing weeks at a time for pickup.

Chris Swanson: we will also follow up with Eureka regarding his recycling complaints.

Moermond: first, we have a number of complaints about other kinds of assessments we aren't talking about today. We have what looks like vehicle abatement, some street related assessments and those are things that are appealable separately and have come and gone. We have questions of missed service, how would that be investigated? You reach out to Highland?

Swanson: we will reach out to them for their records. We haven't had many missed collections with Highland, they have a good record even in inclement weather.

Moermond: in the event you identify missed pickups, this is the lowest level of service right?

Swanson: yes.

Moermond: if there are missed pickups can you get back to my office so we can

proportionally decrease the assessment?

Swanson: we will do that

Moermond: they're talking about mix-up with neighbors and containers. In spite of the mix-up, the actual bill was for the smallest every other week. So they may have had the wrong one but they weren't being charged for the big one.

Swanson: correct

Moermond: in terms of opting in or out, it simply exists and if you have a single-family home through fourplex you are in. Alright, sounds like they are not generally happy with City government and assessments in general. The main follow up is finding out about any missed pickups. As it stands now I'll recommend it is ratified in whole.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/25/2021

- 2** [RLH TA 21-342](#) Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 2127 NORTONIA AVENUE. (File No. CG2102A3, Assessment No. 210108)

Sponsors: Prince

Layover to LH August 10, 2021 at 3 pm to give PO time to respond to staff letter.

No one appeared

Moermond: please highlight the letter you sent for the record.

Staff report by Clare Pillsbury: per your request we mailed a letter to the property owner on Monday, July 26. The letter highlights the fact they have a hearing today at 9 am. We addressed her complaint regarding price of the service and a service hold. We let her now she has a 64-gallon cart and there are options at a lower cost. We told her to contact her hauler to change her level of service. We also included the service hold form with instructions to mail it to the hauler at least 2 weeks before she leaves for the winter.

Moermond: so we have that information, we'll see if she reaches back with further commentary. Right now the nature of her complaints doesn't really justify a reduction. She's talking about being assessed and paying Republic. It appears she didn't do that or file for a hold. She may be confused. Maybe something else. But it only went out Monday so we'll give her a chance to reach back out. We'll put this on our regular hearing calendar on August 10 and put a recommendation on then.

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 8/10/2021

- 3** [RLH TA 21-352](#) Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 735 SIMON AVENUE. (File No. CG2102A3, Assessment No. 210108)

Sponsors: Brendmoen

Approve the assessment.

No one appeared

Clare Pillsbury: I emailed Mai about this. We actually got a phone number from the hauler from them so we should try calling them. They did initially send a letter.

Moermond: have we had a previous hearing on this?

Pillsbury: no.

Moermond: he does say you failed to help me on this matter so I wanted to double check that.

Mai Vang: no.

Pillsbury: it was sent to the assessment office, copying Advanced.

Moermond: I wonder if she has walkup service, or if there is a need for it? It mentions applying for disability.

Pillsbury: the hauler didn't indicate she had that but I can talk with them.

[tried calling number twice, it immediately disconnected]

Moermond: we don't have a number for this person, let's put it on the record.

Staff report by Clare Pillsbury: we received a letter from the property owner indicating they paid their Quarter 1 invoice by check, stating they are low income and have applied for disability and their container is rarely full. They would like a reduced rate and financial help and we have failed to help them so far. We looked into this complaint, specifically about the payment on July 14. The hauler records show that payment, March 16, 2021 for \$5. The property owner did send a note on June 16 saying she needed help lowering the bill. However that's not possible as she is already at the lowest level of service. Therefore we recommend approving the assessment.

Moermond: I am going to ask if staff could send out a walkup form and indicate it wasn't clear from your appeal if this would be of service to you. This is every other week? So she's at the lowest rate. She is paying first quarter in July so it was applied to the third quarter. So we just do the customer service thing. Recommend approval.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/25/2021

- 4 RLH TA 21-344** Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 27 WINTHROP STREET NORTH. (File No. CG2102A1, Assessment No. 210106)

Sponsors: Prince

Delete the assessment.

No one appeared

Staff report by Clare Pillsbury: we got a call saying the property owner passed in March 2020. They didn't stop service right away while they were cleaning out but state they contacted the hauler in May. Hauler records show no contact. However as a courtesy we recommend removing the Quarter 1 assessment. We will also remove the Quarter 2 assessment.

Moermond: agreed, so recommend.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/25/2021

10:00 a.m. Hearings

- 5 **RLH TA 21-336** Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 794 AURORA AVENUE. (File No. CG2102A4, Assessment No. 210109)
- Sponsors: Thao
- Reduce assessment from \$109.06 to \$59.23. (Staff to reduce Q2, 2021 assessment to \$59.23. Hauler to adjust Q3 bill)*
- Mitchell Letourneau, owner, appeared via phone*
- Moermond: you appealed a special assessment for garbage hauling.*
- Letourneau: in a sense. I never hired these guys.*
- Moermond: I'm conducting hearings on people appealing assessments on these. I have staff from the garbage hauling program on the line as well. [Moermond gives background of appeals process]. I read your statement and we'll give you a chance to state where you're coming from.*
- Letourneau: my time is pretty minimal but sure.*
- Staff report by Clare Pillsbury: property owner feels they shouldn't have to pay since they feel they have been forced by the City to use the service. Under Citywide garbage service all residential properties up to four units are required to have a cart and receive service. There is no option to opt out. This property owner is responsible for paying the charge as service was provided. We recommend approval.*
- Moermond: why are you appealing?*
- Letourneau: I never hired you guys. I had Advanced Disposal and you force me to go through another company. That's a monopoly. I have no other choice. You charge me twice as much a month. That's ridiculous. I use my can maybe once every 2 weeks. I create minimal garbage. I don't believe I should have to pay twice the price because you forced my previous hauler out of the City. I wasn't even around for the vote where you kicked out all my choices. I'm sure there are other people that disagree with this.*
- Moermond: I'm wondering, who was your previous hauler?*
- Letourneau: Advanced, and then Waste Management before that.*
- Moermond: they are still in business in the City. Next question is you have what looks like a medium cart. Is that the size? Same as your recycling?*
- Letourneau: yes.*
- Moermond: but you are saying you don't fill it up every week?*
- Letourneau: no.*
- Moermond: I'd like to help you out and cut your bill down. If we can get you into the*

small every other week size cart, I will change this bill to reflect that rate. And we'll do the same thing for quarter 2 and 3, so we'll get the whole year down to reflect as if you had the smaller sized cart. Will you be willing to do that?

Letourneau: I am. I have been screwed over by my boss, I had to hire a tax lawyer. I haven't got any Covid relief. I got Covid twice. I got no unemployment since he never filed my taxes. Until I got a new job, I'm paying catch up on every other bill. Plus the additional taxes. Anything giving Covid relief? I keep getting hit with something new. That's why I called you in frustration. I'm getting hit from all angles. I can't even get stimulus checks. I've been taking a hit. I don't even know if I'll have my house soon if my loan restructure doesn't go through. What is the quarterly cost?

Moermond: I can tell you that for this kind of assessment there isn't any Covid relief on it, but what I'm doing would cut down the assessment considerably.

Swanson: the quarterly cost for a small every other week cart is \$59.23, which is \$50 less than you're paying now.

Letourneau: ok.

Moermond: if we go with the plan, it will save you \$200 for the year.

Letourneau: ok. Send me the bill.

Moermond: we will let your hauler know you want to trade out the can you have for the smaller every other week can. What's your pickup day?

Letourneau: today.

Moermond: Mr. Swanson, when would they do the trade out on the cart?

Swanson: they do those the day of collection. So have your cart out next Thursday and they will switch it out.

Moermond: so put it out even if there's no trash in it. I will reduce this bill to \$59.23 and we'll have staff do that for Quarter 2 and 3. The third one will look like a credit, but the amount will turn out the same. Any questions about that with the bill from Highland, you can reach out to Chris Swanson. Do you have an email Mr. Letourneau?

Letourneau: I do but I prefer text.

Moermond: we'll make sure you get a letter so you have Chris Swanson's contact information if you have questions along the way. I wish you a good rest of the day.

Letourneau: ok. Thank you everyone.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/25/2021

6 [RLH TA 21-346](#)

Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 303 CLARENCE STREET. (File No. CG2102A4, Assessment No. 210109)

Sponsors: Prince

Layover to LH August 10, 2021 at 3 pm (unable to reach owner).

Voicemail at 10:16 am: this is Moermond: calling from St. Paul City Council about your appealed special assessment for garbage services at 303 Clarence. We'll try back in 10 to 15 minutes.

Voicemail at 10:36 am: this is Moermond calling again reaching out about your assessment for services. Since we've been unable to reach you, we'll try one more time August 10 between 3 and 4.

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 8/10/2021

- 7 RLH TA 21-350** Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 1223 FARRINGTON STREET. (File No. CG2102A2, Assessment No. 210107)

Sponsors: Brendmoen

Approve the assessment.

No one appeared

Staff report by Clare Pillsbury: the property owner sent a notice of non-acceptance in response to the Public Hearing notice. Our response is that all residential properties are required to have a cart and receive service with no option to opt out. They are also responsible for paying the charge as service was provided.

Moermond: so recommended.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/25/2021

- 8 RLH TA 21-345** Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 1132 ORANGE AVENUE EAST. (File No. CG2102A2, Assessment No. 210107)

Sponsors: Yang

Reduce the assessment from \$109.06 to \$68.11. (Staff to reduce Q2, 2021 to \$68.11 and hauler to credit \$304.18)

No one appeared

Staff report by Clare Pillsbury: the property owner reached out and said they have a 35-gallon every other week cart but is still being charged for a 96-gallon cart. Hauler records do show they have been trying to get this addressed since April of 2020. An email sent from the property owner to hauler on April 20 clearly shows a photo of a 35-gallon cart. To rectify that we have confirmed with the property owner they will get a refund of \$304.18, the difference between 64-gallon and 35-gallon cart. We'll be adjusting both Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 assessments to \$68.11. We recommend reducing the assessment.

Moermond: they have been billed incorrectly since the beginning. The hauler is going to correct the situation through Quarter 4 2020 by giving a credit of the difference. We are reducing for Quarter 1, 2021 and Quarter 2, 2021. Third quarter the hauler will do it.

Pillsbury: we have confirmed with the haler they have adjusted the Quarter 3 bill.

Moermond: recommend the reduction. \$109.06 to \$68.11.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/25/2021