

A composting facility for Tulsa's green waste could create a local compost product, leaving a smaller annual bill to taxpayers or even paying for itself, according to a presentation to a City Council task force Tuesday. Michael Patton, director of the Metropolitan Environmental Trust, presented several compost facility options that "if successful" could recycle green waste that is picked up at residents' curbsides at a low cost to the city. Streets and Stormwater Division Manager Roy Teeters presented estimated costs from composting facilities in other cities with potential operating costs per ton of composting green waste.

"At this amount, I personally would say that we've got to continue to think about this," Tulsa City Councilor Phil Lakin said. The trash task force will eventually make a recommendation to the city's trash board on how to proceed. Patton presented research to the Tulsa City Council's Trash Operations Task Force on seven other U.S. cities that have working green waste programs. In Austin, the city's waste program makes and sells compost "branded Dillo Dirt," Patton said. Teeters said about 5,000 tons of green waste was recycled into energy at Tulsa's incinerator during a year's time ending this October. The city's current practice of taking green waste to the incinerator costs about \$12 per ton, including a state tax, Teeters said. A compost facility could cost \$18.77 per ton at the lowest, Teeters said based on research he presented on comparable programs. The highest comparable program was \$36.73 per ton. An Oklahoma Poll of 400 Tulsans conducted Nov. 1-5 indicated that 64.2 percent of likely voters approve of the city's trash system, up from 55.3 percent a year ago. As for green waste, 62.6 percent of respondents said they would prefer that the city mulch or compost the material as officials intended "even if it costs more" while 21.6 percent indicated that they approve of burning green waste. The margin of error is 4.9 percent. While about 5,000 tons of green waste is known to have been incinerated last year, Teeters said city estimates of actual green waste disposal are more than three times that because residents often put it in with

their regular trash. While operating costs could be low, the initial costs of creating a compost facility could be substantial, Teeters said. A larger, more expensive facility would lower the annual operating cost, assuming more green waste can be processed, Teeters said. The task force also discussed possible locations for a compost facility, including next to the city's existing wood-chipping facility. Teeters said a compost facility could also drive down costs of wood chipping. Currently, the city pays to dispose of excess wood chips that build up each year. They would instead go to the compost facility, Teeters said. Green waste compost in other cities

Austin, Texas Curbside collection in paper bags or containers no larger than 34 gallons. Material is mixed with bio solids from the city's waste treatment plant. The compost, branded Dillo Dirt, sold by the city and by local retailers. Columbus, Ohio Curbside collection is every two weeks. Allows any type of paper bag or customer-owned container up to 30 gallons. A dozen drop-off locations allow year-round yard waste free of charge. Houston, Texas Curbside recycling requires biodegradable plastic bags certified by the city. Bags cost about \$1 each. Kansas City, Mo. Requires paper sacks for leaves and branches but does not allow grass clippings. Two collection days are scheduled about four weeks apart from late October to December. There is a limit of 20 sacks or bundles of branches, no more than 40 pounds each. Little Rock, Ark. Weekly collection by bag, box or customer-purchased container less than 30 gallons and weighing less than 50 pounds. The city separates plastic bags mechanically and by hand Compost sells for about \$25 per ton, or a program delivers 10 cubic yards of the compost for about \$250. Source: Michael Patton, director of the Metropolitan Environmental Trust