



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Food Cycler Pilot Program

Date: December 12, 2023

Our Vision

Argyle is the community of choice to invest, live and play.

Our Identity

Argyle invests time & talent in growth opportunities in fishing, tourism, and renewable energy sectors.

*Argyle provides affordable taxation while providing safe and **livable** communities and strives to engage and inform our residents on decisions that affect them most.*

Argyle provides high class, accessible recreational and cultural facilities for health and for play.

Objective:

This formal request to the council aims to ascertain their interest in participating in the municipal food waste Pilot Project proposed by Food Cycle Science.

Background:

On November 9, 2023, Kassia Regnier from Food Cycle Science presented the council with an opportunity for collaboration. The company seeks to partner with the municipality to assist residents in minimizing food waste in landfills. They offer innovative solutions capable of transforming food waste into nutrient-rich by-products within a remarkable 8-hour timeframe. Food Cycle Science proposes the adoption of two devices and is seeking the council's support in promoting these devices for residents to purchase.

Advantages:

1. Waste and Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction:

The FoodCycler Pilot Program promises a significant reduction in organic waste sent to landfills. This diversion not only aids in waste reduction but also diminishes greenhouse gas emissions, as less transportation is required.

2. Compost Production:

The compost produced by FoodCycler units is nutrient-rich and can enhance soil quality, water retention, and plant growth. This resource can be valuable for community gardens, agricultural projects,

and local landscaping. Furthermore, it reduces the reliance on chemical fertilizers, contributing to the overall environmental health of the municipality.

3. Cost Reduction Associated with Waste Management:

Participating in the Food Cycler Pilot Program can lead to a reduction in various costs related to waste management. This includes decreased transportation costs, transfer fees, and collection fees, offering a financial benefit to the municipality.

Drawbacks:

1. Financial Investment:

The initial cost of \$22,000 required to purchase the Food Cycler units has not been budgeted for this year, posing a financial challenge to the municipality.

2. Promotion:

Introducing this new project would necessitate the municipality to incur costs for promotion and marketing. With an expected participation of 200 families in the pilot project, there is uncertainty about the ease of attracting this number of families to purchase the devices.

3. Education and Outreach:

Staff members would need to become experts on the new composting devices, undertaking the responsibility of educating residents and conducting outreach in communities to highlight the benefits of this alternative composting method.

4. Behavior Changes:

The proposal requires residents to alter their current composting practices, potentially leading to the need for reeducation. The timing is suboptimal as the municipality is currently enforcing a two-bag recycling policy, which has already raised concerns among residents. Furthermore, the impending removal of black bags in April 2024 may result in resistance to adopting a new composting method.

5. Associated Costs:

Residents may face additional costs, including increased electricity usage, maintenance expenses, and potential repair costs. Even with available rebates, the actual cost of the devices remains a substantial investment for many residents, ranging from \$150 to \$300.

6. Unknown Challenges:

Unforeseen challenges may arise during the implementation of the program, demanding additional resources for an extended period. These challenges will only become apparent once the program is introduced to residents.

Other financial considerations

In searching for related stories associated with the Food Cycler program, “the Municipality of Red Lake did its first 12-week trial from August to October 2022. The results determined about 242 kilograms of food waste would be diverted, per household, per year, based on the findings from the 110 households in the pilot.”

When we convert this to a 200 resident pilot program, the assumption is that 440 kilograms of food waste would be diverted. This converts to 44 Metric Tons a year.

Over the estimated useful life of the project (estimated 8 years), this diversion of 352 Metric Tons a year would save Argyle \$40,128 in diverted waste.

The municipal investment is \$22,000 as noted above, so the profit over 8 years, before internal costs is \$18,128, or \$2,266 per year. This meagre annual profit would be more than offset by the administrative cost of operation. Furthermore, the current recycling option does not cost the resident to administer, whereby the purchase of the Food Cycler, and the power consumption used for its operation, would be paid by the resident.

It is true that there would be less compost waste, thereby less footprint on the environment. But I would suggest that the compost in current operation is reused and sold to third party operators for non food fertilization. Council should keep in mind that the pilot is not a replacement for the current green bin system, so the cost of pickup (charged by the hauler) would not be avoided.

In short, there is no fiscal reason to do the pilot, and little environmental benefit in doing the pilot.

Recommendations:

- 1) Option #1 The municipality of Argyle partners with Food Cyclers Pilot Program and commits to 22, 000 upfront investment.
- 2) Option #2 We defer the Food Cyclers request for the 2024/25 Budget year if council feel that this program is important to their constituents.
- 3) Option #3 We deny the request from Food Cyclers.

Suggested motion:

Option #3 While we acknowledge the potential advantages of the Food Cyclers Pilot program for the municipality, it remains crucial to uphold the priorities already established by the municipality. Only projects that provide large benefits to the Municipality should override existing priorities that were assessed thoroughly and approved by Council. Given that the associated costs for the initial investment, promotion, marketing, and potential additional resources have not been budgeted, and the municipality has already set its priorities, it would be prudent to decline this request.

Therefore, the suggested motion is that council denies the request to partner with Food Cyclers Science.