



City of Cambridge
Department of Public Works

John F. Nardone, Acting Commissioner

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To: Yi-An Huang,
City Manager

From: John F. Nardone,
Acting Commissioner DPW

Date: July 29, 2025

Re: Update on Teamster Strike /Republic Services

Background:

- **July 1, 2025:** Approximately 450 Republic Services workers represented by Teamsters Local 25 in the Boston area went on strike. This action was taken after Republic Services and the union failed to come to agreement in contract negotiations.
- **Strike Vote:** The decision to strike was overwhelming, with more than 90% of union members voting in favor.
- **Spreading the Strike:** The Boston strike quickly led to solidarity actions and expanded picket lines involving other Teamsters locals at Republic Services facilities across the country, affecting over 2,000 workers nationwide.
- **Negotiation Stalemates:** Despite federal mediation, negotiations have seen little progress with key outstanding issues around health insurance and wages.

Widespread Impact in Massachusetts:

- **Disrupted Service:** The strike has severely disrupted trash and recycling collection for hundreds of thousands of residents in 14 Massachusetts communities, including Peabody, Malden, Beverly, Danvers, Gloucester, Canton, Wakefield, Lynnfield, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Marblehead, Reading, North Reading, Swampscott, and Watertown.
- **Public Health Concerns:** Accumulating waste has led to public health concerns, with reports of overflowing dumpsters, pests, and foul odors.
- **Municipal Action:** Several affected municipalities are facing significant costs and logistical challenges. Six communities (Canton, Danvers, Gloucester, Beverly, Peabody, and Malden) filed a joint lawsuit in Salem Superior Court seeking injunctive relief to compel Republic Services to resume service, citing breach of contract. Some towns are considering terminating their contracts.

Boston (not directly under Republic's municipal contracts) nonetheless began issuing fines directly to Republic starting July 7, rather than penalizing individual businesses for code violations related to uncollected trash.

Governor Healey and multiple local officials have publicly called on Republic to reach a fair agreement, citing the public health crisis and economic strain on municipalities.

Cambridge-Specific Impact:

- **Disrupted Service:** Cambridge does not use Republic Services for trash pick-up. Our municipal trash collections are handled in-house by the Solid Waste Division at Public Works. However, we do have a contract with Republic for disposal of our curbside trash at their transfer station in Roxbury. Approximately two weeks prior to the strike, Republic reached out to the City to inform us a strike was possible and that it could result in a shutdown of the transfer station. Public Works, working with our Purchasing Department, reached out to several transfer locations to plan for alternatives. On July 7, we began disposing of curbside trash at a non-Republic waste management facility in Lynn. While the change to our disposal site has had some impact on collection times (about 30 minutes round trip for our vehicles to go to Lynn once daily rather than Roxbury), there has been no significant impact on our municipal rubbish service.
- **Businesses and Large Property Owners:** Republic Services collects both trash and recycling from many of our businesses and larger privately owned properties. While we have yet to see the more significant issues that some of the listed cities and towns have had, four weeks into the strike there is certainly an impact on collections at these locations. Properties have had to request additional services from competing private haulers, are having troubles with overflowing trash areas, and are having difficulty getting responses from Republic Services.
- **The City's Ability to Assist:** All Public Works solid waste collection workers are members of the Teamsters Local 25 union. The Teamsters have made it clear that should our employees be required to pick up any Republic Services waste receptacles (dumpsters or barrels), they would consider this as crossing the picket line. While we have been able to assist some of our existing customers, who supplement City pickups with Republic, these locations are unique and extremely limited.

We have heard from many businesses and have been in touch with several of our business associations. When businesses have reached out for assistance, we have been sending supervisors to evaluate their situation and help provide recommendations. We continue to advise businesses that they should be reaching out to Republic daily insisting on service. They should also be looking into other private haulers who, Teamsters indicate, will meet Republic prices. Finally, we have reminded them that the City offers both business recycling and compost programs, which can take some of the burden off eligible businesses' trash collections while also reducing costs and supporting these important environmental programs.

Public Works is continuing to look at ways in which we might be able to assist with some of the issues that the strike has caused, while also maintaining our commitment to our own union workforce. We are fortunate that we are one of only a few municipalities collecting our own trash and are doing all we can to not jeopardize our ability to effectively collect from our Cambridge residents.

