Fate of Indy dirty MRF to be decided this week

By Editorial Staff, Resource Recycling

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The Board of Public Works in Indianapolis will reportedly be voting on Wednesday to determine whether a deal for a controversial garbage-sorting materials recovery facility will go forward.

The Indianapolis Business Journal reported the vote date earlier this week. Approval from the Board of Public Works is the final step needed to validate a contract between Indianapolis and Covanta that would send waste collected in the city to a yet-to-be-built $45 million facility aimed at separating recyclable materials from garbage.

Local recycling advocates and some companies that rely on recycled material have in recent months voiced strong opposition to the deal, which was negotiated by the office of Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard. Appointees by the mayor make up a majority of Board of Public Works members.

Ballard's office has defended the Covanta partnership as a low-cost method to improve diversion in an area that has seen low recycling rates. Opponents say the deal has not gone through a thorough public vetting process, and they note the contract, which runs through 2028, would lock the city into an unproven recycling system.

The Business Journal article notes that under the terms of the contract the city would be forced to pay Covanta $333,000 a month if it opted to pursue a different municipal recycling program.

Note: An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated the vote date was reported by the Indianapolis Star. It was reported by the Indianapolis Business Journal.