Civic group urges trash collection

The Villa del Rey Citizens Association wants the city-parish government to re-establish the same heavy trash collection service it provided before hiring Browning-Ferris Industries Inc. to pick up residential garbage.

The request triggered a debate at Thursday night’s meeting of the Federation of Greater Baton Rouge Civic Associations, which postponed action on the resolution to give members time to discuss the proposal with the various civic associations.

M.A. “Mike” Tassin, president of the Villa del Rey Citizens Association, said most Baton Rouge residents were unaware BFI would not pick up loose bulk trash when the city moved to private collection.

“The elderly, the disabled, the handicapped, the widowed, the single and divorced females and the poor are unable to meet the rigid standards of cutting and bundling and are even being threatened with fines to comply,” the resolution said.

The proposal asks the city-parish “to obtain bids to contract four heavy trash pickup crews with equipment, each crew to be composed of four persons, for the sole purpose of removing only heavy trash which is unsuitable for bagging, with no provisions for raking and removing residual debris . . . .”

Re-establishing the heavy trash pickup service can be done for less than $1 million yearly, Tassin estimated.

Federation President R.I. “Rip” Wilkinson pointed out that Department of Public Works Director William Howe has come up with several options for dealing with those problems, including contracting the service out to BFI.

Although some residents have resisted the bundling requirements, Wilkinson said “more than half the people are now bundling trash.” He wondered whether a return to city-parish heavy trash pickup would encourage people to quit bundling.

Sherwood Forest delegate Elliott Atkinson said before city-parish gets back into the trash business, his civic association wants BFI to pay back the approximately $1 million such service would cost the city.

Harley Brown, BFI district manager, said last month fees paid to the private trash collection company wouldn’t change even if city-parish employees return to picking up heavy trash, pointing out his firm picks up trash the same time it picks up garbage — more often than the city-parish used to.

In addition, he pointed out the contract never included pickup for heavy tree limbs and loose trash.

Another federation delegate who lives outside the city limits said he would want the parish included in the trash pickup.

The federation also heard Bob Dolose, planning director, explain a new model ordinance that is being drafted on all types of outdoor advertising.

In addition, Public Service Commissioner Louis Lambert addressed the group, calling Gulf States Utilities Co.’s request for a 40 percent rate increase “unreasonable.” He urged federation members who oppose the rate hike to write the four other public service commissioners.