

San Jose Bag Stakeholder Meeting  
February 25, 2009

In Attendance: City of San José - Emy Mendoza, Andrea Case, Andria Jaramillo, Noelle Vergara, Kathy Duong, Donna Perala; residents and other groups: Deborah Arant, Evelyn Thorn

Via Phone Conference: Ryan Kenny (American Chemistry Council), Kent Regan (Eco-unit), Tim James (California Grocers Association), Darrel Costello (Roplast)

Agenda:

1. Report from City staff meeting with American Chemistry Council (ACC)
2. Information regarding Santa Clara County meetings on plastic and paper bags.
3. Report on outreach to San José community regarding bag action.
4. Plans for future San José Bag Stakeholder meetings.

**1. Report from City staff meeting with American Chemistry Council (ACC)**

On February 20, City staff met with the ACC to go over possible partnership opportunities regarding litter clean-up, litter prevention, and potential expanded recycling programs, and to discuss what other stakeholders should be included. We decided that March 11, during the usual time for the San Jose stakeholder meeting, we will be having the meeting with ACC and other industry groups. Notes from that meeting are attached.

Comments:

Ryan – Expressed that they would like to partner with the city and possibly extend recycling programs, encourage greater public education, litter abatement, and look at current programs.

T& E has asked us to look at potential partnerships. This meeting will work towards it.

City staff will be reporting the current effort to work with potential partners and possible alternatives and options to T&E on April 6, 2009. Staff will also be reporting on possible options for the ordinance including a complete ban, a fee to be phased in over time, a CRV-like fee, or education only approach.

**2. Information regarding Santa Clara County meetings**

County Recycling and Waste Reduction Commission meeting to occur same day, 2/25, at 5:15 pm 1555 Berger Drive, Auditorium.

Source Reduction & Recycling meeting (sub-committee meeting for Commission) to occur following day, 2/26, 9:30am, San Jose City Hall, Room 550.

**3. Report on outreach to San José community regarding bag action.**

City staff has been doing outreach to various business districts and business groups, such as the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Willow Glen Association, Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce, and Japantown among others. Local community involvement is extremely important and welcome.

All organizations, groups, and associations are encouraged to request a Reusable Bag campaign presentation.

Question about stakeholder meetings: How has the public responded to proposed ordinance?

A lot of people have been very supportive about the idea, and many say “just ban plastic bags”. The majority understand (after the presentation) that the main goal is to reduce single-use plastic bag usage and make a transition to reusable bags. But many may have a misconception about the fee.

Comment: The San Francisco (bag ban) example has shown that most consumers begin to use a lot more paper bags because there is an implied message that paper is better—which is not. Paper is as harmful or even more than plastic.

Several business owners have expressed their objection to this ordinance in part because of the added burden on administration, increased work load, and potential competitive disadvantage if bag fee is not implemented regionally.

We need to find ways that this works for everyone.

#### **4. Plans for future San José Bag Stakeholder meetings.**

We would like to talk to non-profit stores and hear what their concerns are on March 25, 2009. We are also looking forward to having a similar gathering with small businesses.

Question:

Are we planning to avoid the fee and just work with partnerships?

The fee option is still there, as well as other alternatives or a combination of both.

The new Reusable Bag web page is now available: [sjrecycles.org/bags/](http://sjrecycles.org/bags/)

Comment:

(Dealing with the Ireland bag fee example)

Paper bags were not commonly used in Ireland before the imposed fee on plastic bags; and to avoid the transition a potential fee was also suggested if retailers started using paper bags.

The 25 cent fee has not been approved and may change. There is an idea of phasing and starting with a 10 cent fee and see what results we receive from that.

Many people have the wrong idea about the fee. Education is crucial – people feel more comfortable when they hear what would be done with the fee and that there are ways to avoid it by using reusable bags. The city is currently working with different groups and organizations, chambers, PACT, Generation Engage, to help educate and make people aware of this issue.

People sometimes don't realize that the fee is completely avoidable and they think that the funds gathered from it will go to the general fund, that this is a way to create income for the City. We have been making the point in our presentations that if a fee program is successful, and consumers switch to reusable bags, then there will be no income from the fee. We recognize that during the initial implementation period, there will be a good amount collected, but we expect that as consumers switch to reusable bags, the amount collected will be drastically reduced.

Some feedback has been received from large chain stores such as Target and Rite Aid, but many department stores have not provided input.