

San José Bag Stakeholder Meeting
March 11, 2009

In attendance: Kent Ragen (EcoUnit), Laura Reinhard (Save the Bay), Tim James (CA Grocers Association), Jerry Denny (San Jose Flea Market Inc), Mary Morse (ESD-Urban Runoff) , Andrea Case (ESD Pollution Prevention), Jacqueline Campos (Silicon Valley Anti-Litter and Graffiti), Ryan Kenny (American Chemistry Council), Eva Klinger (CSJ Redevelopment Agency), Carlo Pedron (Adopt-A-Highway Program), Leslie Hamilton (Friends of Guadalupe River Park and Gardens), Skip Lacaze (ESD-Zerowaste/IWM), Kathy Sakamoto (Japantown Business Association) , Carolina Camarena(CSJ/ESD), Ken Kelly (Salvation Army), Deborah Arant (resident, Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association), Manny Diaz (American Chemistry Council), Bob Truesdale(Rite Aid), Trish Mulvey (Clean South Bay), Kathy Duong (CSJ/Council District 4), Emy Mendoza (ESD-Zerowaste/IWM), Jo Zientek (ESD-IWM Deputy Director), Darrell Costello (Roplast - via phone conference).

Agenda:

- I. Introductions and discussion on goal of the meeting: 10:00 – 10:10
- II. Eco-unit (Kent Ragen): 10:10 – 10:20
- III. Discussion of ideas related to litter cleanup and litter prevention: 10:20 – 11:00
- IV. Discussion of expanded recycling: 11:00 – 11:15
- V. Next steps – Review of action items: 11:15 – 11:30

1. Goals of the meeting:

Discussion of litter clean-up and litter prevention partnerships with ACC.

Learn about ACC's Proposed Plan.

Is there a recyclable or compostable reusable bag?

Presented reusable plastic bag and discussed how it can be recycled.

Discussion:

Consumers have no compostable, commercially compostable, options in this area. One of the challenges moving forward with compostable bags in retail stores is the proper disposal of such bags that may not be identified correctly. A problem can be encountered in processing, when compostable bags contaminate regular plastic bags and other recyclable material.

Manufacturers need to have certification in order to process compostable items.

Compostable bags are not very reusable or durable—they have a very short lifespan.

2. ECO UNIT Program Presented by Kent Ragen:

Program built on a reward system platform; consumers get rewarded for bringing in their reusable bags to retail locations that have adopted the Eco Unit program. Consumers will be able to create an account and earn Eco Units, digital currency, which can later be redeemed with action to improve the environment. It may involve planting trees, supporting a local organization, or action.

This reward system would be funded and controlled by the retailer and not the city.

This program is designed to motivate consumers to make the transition to reusable bags, and make it a lifestyle. Something that can be learned from the San Francisco plastic bag ban, many simply switched over to paper bags because they were not sufficiently encouraged to make the transition to reusable bags.

This system will motivate action. We have seen that loyalty marketing can and has worked – consumers get rewarded with currency that benefits the environment. People want to be part of a cause, social good, environmental good.

This program has just been adopted by a few retailers in Oregon.

Benefits:

Retailers save on cost for plastic bags

Retailers can use this program beyond reusable bags – can motivate other eco friendly behavior such as purchases of CFL light bulbs or local produce.

Additional program details can be made available upon request

Discussion Comments:

As mentioned before, the consumer may decide when to redeem their credits and then the retailers will make a positive contribution to the environment by planting trees or making cash contributions to a local environmental group or cause.

Electronic credits generated by retailers

It would be very difficult for small businesses to participate in such programs.

3. Discussion of ideas related to litter cleanup and litter prevention including ACC's Single-Use Bag Plan

Ryan Kenny- American Chemistry Council:

Presented a Proposed Public-Private Partnership plan (See attachment) designed to reintroduce California's Plastic Bag Recycling Law (AB 2449) established in 2007. Highlight the fact that infrastructure already exist in retail stores and pharmacies where plastic bags can be returned for recycling. The Plan includes Public Education Campaigns, Contribution and/or expansion of current litter abatement programs, and infrastructure improvement.

The ACC will pay for most of the programs, but will work with current and future partners. Budget has not been presented with proposal and will not be released to the public.

Comment:

This program should also include plastic film, plastic that is used to wrap many products we purchase (for example, bread bags, wrap for toilet paper, paper towels, plastic around cigarette packs). Many people don't know about this program or the fact that plastic film can be recycled as well.

Question: Is there or is there not a market for recycled plastic bags.

Answer: Yes there is still a market for large, clean bales of plastic bags. Plastic is difficult in curbside recycling because it is not clean, and it gets into the machinery. The market for clean plastic for recycling does tend to fluctuate; many times Haulers have to pay to have these bales removed from their hands. It's not very profitable.

Haulers have, but many times the plastic is not recycled because it creates problems with machinery. Millions of dollars are spent each year to repair machinery that's been damaged by plastic bag processing.

No specific data has been released to confirm recycling of the plastic bags collected at retail stores and pharmacies as required by AB 2449.

Retailers have agreements with companies that will collect material and then create a larger gathering of the plastic to help gain interest for this plastic.

Many, if not most, plastic bags placed in residential recycling bins are not recycled in San José.

Ryan Kenny: One of the goals of this plan is to re-introduce the program to the public. Maybe create awareness through the creation of "Plastic Bag Recycling Month" or something else. The ACC will produce campaign content, sponsor significant clean-up programs such as "Keep California Clean," promote community outreach in local papers, provide resources and encourage volunteers from local programs

The City of San Jose's Park, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services provides Gloves, pick up sticks, vests, and trash bags to volunteers through its Anti-Graffiti & Litter program.

To be successful, these programs will require long term campaigns to encourage behavioral change and create long lasting habits – something longer than one or two month in duration.

The City of San José ESD Marketing staff is very interested to work with ACC and create a positive and effective campaign.

Public education is very encouraging and important. Will funding for this proposed plan continue if 25 cent fee is adopted?

Ryan Kenny: We would like to go with this program for two years before implementing or considering other options.

Metrics need to be added to ACC plan and its programs, including AB 2449.

Need measurable goals, develop criteria, and results from all programs included in the ACC's plan. A combination of programs will always be required. It would be beneficial for us to see numbers, target dates, percentages, how this can increase recycling.

Save The Bay and Coastal Cleanup: 15,000 plastic bags were recently pulled out from the bay in one day. This reflects the need to prevent pollution and not simply clean it up.

Question: How can results be measured? It's impossible to attribute the garbage coming from this city and other cities exclusively.

Answer: Metric can be used to see the amount of plastic bags being recycled by retailers through AB 2449 plastic bag recycling program.

Action Item:

1. ACC proposal to be sent to all San José Bag Stakeholders
2. All stakeholders invited to send comments, and questions on proposal to Emy Mendoza and Ryan Kenny by March 18. Everyone in attendance is welcomed to contribute input and comments to AAC program proposal via email or any other way. The proposal will be sent out to all San José Bag Stakeholders and comments should be sent to Ryan Kenny (ACC) and Emy Mendoza (ESD).
3. Emy will summarize comments, and send to Ryan by Monday March 23.
4. Summary and response from ACC to be sent to San José Bag Stakeholder group by Friday, March 27.

Contact info for sending comments:

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