

San José Bag Stakeholder Meeting
March 25, 2009

In attendance:

Chad Harris (Sacred Heart) , Chris Brasuell (T2 BioPak), Ariella Lewis (Generation Engage), Ken Kelly (The Salvation Army), Servando Perez (CSJ – Anti Graffiti and Litter), Trish Mulvey(Clean South Bay), Lori Mathis (Second Harvest Food Bank), Peter Rushbrook (San Tomas West Neighborhood Ass.), Phil Cornish(Friends of GRPG), Shannon Godfrey(BOMA), Emy Mendoza(ESD-ZeroWaste/IWM), Skip Lacaze(ESD)

Phone: Darrell Castello(Roplast)

Agenda:

- I. Introduction and discussion on goals of the meeting.
- II. Listen to input and comments from present non-profit organizations regarding paper, plastic, and reusable bags.
- III. Plans for future San José Bag Stakeholder meetings.

I. Goals of this Meeting

This meeting will be focusing on the needs of non-profit organization regarding paper, plastic, and reusable bags.

II. Non-profit Organizations

Second Harvest Food Bank

Operation Brown Bag provides food to nearly six thousand low income households and seniors in Santa Clara County and uses paper and plastic bags to distribute their items. The bags are in part provided by the members themselves; there is an exchange program, members bring back the empty bags and get their food on a previously returned bag. It would be a burden if they would have to purchase bags at the store to receive their food.

The bag exchange program may be successful if the entire process was replaced with reusable bags. The initial stages may be difficult but it may work in the long run. There might be some options of having reusable bags donated for this same purpose.

Sacred Heart- Food Pantry

Provides food to over 355 families per day (20 to 30 percent are homeless). 1500 to 1800 individual participants. The Pantry on average utilizes about 1,200 plastic bags and 400 paper bags per day. No reusable bag program is in place at the moment. Organization is very interested in obtaining information about the accessibility of reusable bags and programs which can help promote greater use, including sponsorships and donations.

Most of Sacred Heart's customers don't have the environment high on their priority list. It's difficult to care about the environment when food and money is scarce. This may also be the case for anyone else who is struggling financially.

The Salvation Army

Salvation Army thrift stores in San José utilize close to 1000 bags per day – 5000 per week. Most of their customers are going through economic hardship and would be highly impacted if a bag fee was imposed upon them.

Reusable bags are now sold at local stores for 99 cents, and customers who shop with a reusable bag receive 25 cents off their purchase. Stores are currently selling an average of 50 reusable bags per day. Regular plastic bags come from national headquarters but reusable bags from Santa Clara County.

Salvation Army currently recycles and resells many items including plastics.

Unfortunately, the market for used plastic bags has been uncertain and at times non-existent. Currently they are able to resell for 10 cents a pound.

Security is one of the biggest issues the Salvation Army store had to deal with regarding reusable bags. Customers have the ability to hide items on their bags and simply walk out, but this matter has been resolved.

Several exemptions for businesses are being considered for the ordinance. Some businesses who have a rewards program or other incentives may qualify for exemptions, aside from non-profit organizations or similar businesses.

Comment:

The funds collected from a bag fee would be used for litter prevention and clean up programs, and possibly helping provide reusable bags to those most in need.

Education is an influential factor to promoting reusable bags. People normally don't go through the complete cycle of a bag; they focus on their current purpose and may not be aware of the damages they cause before or after usage. Effective public education, putting reusable bags in people's hands, and the ordinance will be successful – one single strategy will not produce a meaningful outcome.

Friends of Guadalupe River Park & Gardens support the fee, but would also like education and other components to be included to make this fee work

The City would like to request more information from Second Harvest Food Bank and details about their programs including:

- Client quantities per week, month
- Current paper and plastic bag usage
- Source of paper and plastic bag supply (donated, purchased)
- Suggestions about how the city can help make a smooth transition to reusable bags.

ChicoBag takes old reusable bags back and distributes them to non-profit organizations around the world for different purposes. They will even provide the boxes and pay for shipping.

Local non-profit organizations may soon be able to have a reusable bag take back programs or donation programs where different organizations or the public can donate new or gently used reusable bags. Some sanitary issues may arise and they need to be taken into consideration before and after the programs are initiated.

Neighborhood associations, senior centers, and local churches may be great locations to collect reusable bags.

Eventually, Second harvest would like to utilize reusable bags for their food distribution.

The rewards model used by Salvation Army was suggested during public meetings, but this model has not made a significant change in behavior. The city may not have the legal ability to make retailers pay back customers who bring in reusable bags. And many times that same reward given to customers will be added to their product cost.

In general the act of paying hurts more than getting 10 cents or 25 cents back.

An incentive to provide the actual dime or quarter back to the customer after bring in their reusable bag was suggested as a better alternative than simply showing the deduction on the sales receipt.

III. Future Meetings

April 8, 2009

City Hall Room 1047

This meeting will focus on the needs of small businesses, but everyone is welcomed to attend.

Action Item:

1. Emy Mendoza will meet with Second Harvest Food Bank to get additional information about their programs, resources, and special needs.