

San José Bag Stakeholder Meeting
April 22, 2009

In Attendance: Tim James(CA Grocers Association), Ken Kelly (Salvation Army), Trish Mulvey (Clean South Bay), Kathy Duong (CSJ/Council District 4), Phil Cornish(Friends of GRPG), Jerry Denny (San Jose Flea Market Inc), Emy Mendoza (ESD-Zerowaste/IWM), Andrea Case(ESD Pollution Prevention), Brad Imamura

Agenda:

- I. Questions on Previous Discussions
- II. San José Memo to T&E, May 4
- III. Algalita 6/2, 3:00 p.m. Martin Luther King Jr. Library
- IV. Small businesses
 - a. Feedback received (handout)
 - b. Outreach Plans

I. Questions or comments on previous discussions

Discussion:

The Salvation Army would like to obtain educational resources including the plastic bag fact posters posted at San José's ESD lobby at City Hall.

Los Altos Council is interested in becoming involved with the reusable bags topic and possibly having reusable bag collections throughout the city.

The Santa Clara County Salvation Army stores would volunteer and are interested in distributing donated bags to its customers free of charge.

Previous American Chemistry Council (ACC) proposal presented to the City of San José specifies that funding for their partnership will only be provided if San José does not impose a ban or a fee on plastic bags.

The City of San Jose currently measures the amount of garbage and recyclables that are collected in pounds. The opportunity to implement other metrics may be helpful to address the success of upcoming litter prevention efforts pertaining to reducing plastic bag litter and usage.

If a fee on plastic and paper bags was to be implemented, food stamp and WIC recipients may be exempt from the fee. A better alternative would be to provide these recipients with reusable bags and encourage them to comply with the fee strategy.

Question: How will the Palo Alto initiatives on plastic and paper bags affect San José's strategy?

State Legislation currently has 5 bills total; 4 would affect local jurisdiction, two are proposing a fee, two are manufacturer focused – retailers or distributors would have to pay a small fee, 1/10th of a cent. The two bills that include a 25 cent fee, AB68 (Brownley) and AB87 (Davis), have passed through two of several committees. State legislation would override any existing individual city ordinances.

The city is currently reaching out to various chambers of commerce throughout San Jose, but it's important to have meetings or gatherings with small businesses during flexible hours. Possibly offering meetings early in the morning and late in the evening throughout San José.

The Guadalupe River Park & Garden Board of directors would like to receive a city staff presentation on the proposed bag ordinance and reusable bags topic. Jerry Denny from the San Jose Flea Market has invited city staff to meet with its vendors and present this topic.

II. SJ MEMO

The memo to be presented to San José City Council includes a widespread selection of recommendations which can help reduce plastic bag litter and promote shopping with reusable bags. Some of the options include:

- Fee on plastic and paper
- Ban plastic bags and fee on paper
- Public education only

Note: All recommendations will include public education campaigns.

Discussion:

Public education and outreach on the plastic bag issue should include widespread community engagement, in addition to ads on newspapers, radio, or flyers and collateral pieces.

Messaging the reusable bag benefits and making reusable bags available to those most in need would greatly encourage community participation

It would be great if San José made their resources available to other cities that may not have similar outreach capabilities.

III. Algalita

The Algalita Marine Research Foundation, an organization dedicated to the protection of the marine environment and its watersheds through research, education, and

restoration, will be presenting at Martin Luther King Jr. Library on June 2, 2009 at 3:00 p.m.

Algalita's presentation will focus on the prevalence and quantification of plastic debris in the North Pacific Sub-tropical Gyre (NPSG), biological impact of plastics on marine life and the human food chain, and the desorption of plastic toxins into the ambient ocean water.

IV. Feedback from Small Businesses

An idea recommended by small businesses was to begin implementing this fee process at larger stores first, and then move on to smaller businesses if proven to be successful.

How will small businesses be defined?

Businesses are going through tough economic times; this fee will only add another burden to business operations and survival.

Tim James from the California Grocers Association conducted outreach to small businesses with 30 or less employees and one of their main concerns revolved around the management and tracking of the 25 cent fee. With what conditions would small businesses be able to keep the entire fee? Would small businesses have the option to return the entire or most of fee back to the city? (Currently not included in the ordinance)

The stores cannot use the fee retention to pay for their bags; it would be used to cover administration and other implementation costs. The fee cannot be taken in as revenue.

The city should also consider different exemption levels for small businesses and non-profits.

People carrying their reusable bags inside the store can raise security concerns relating to theft.

Many cities including Manhattan Beach and Oakland had their plastic bag bans removed due to the absence of an environmental review.

The plastic and paper bag credit has been given to customers by different stores for a long time as a customer loyalty program – and encouragement to bring back their paper bags. The amount of the reward may not necessarily reflect the cost of the bags to the store.

An important part that consumers have to consider is that the fee is completely avoidable by shopping with reusable bags; which is the main goal of the ordinance. If residents continue to shop with reusable bags and take advantage of the credits many grocery stores offer, they would be able to make a profit on rewards.

This effort is about creating awareness of how we use different products; plastic bags for shopping can easily be replaced by reusable bags. Inner bags for meat, produce are exempt from the fee due to health and safety reasons.

Outreach should be done to new businesses to help them prepare for future changes or simply making them aware of this issue.

Tonight is the County Recycling and Waste Reduction Commission meeting on plastic bags.