

June 28, 2012
5:30 P.M.
Newport, Oregon

The Plastic Bag Community Plan Task Force met on the above date and time in the Conference Room A of the Newport City Hall.

In attendance were Task Force Members: LeOra Johnson, Katherine Howard, Mark Jones, Matt Hawkyard, Peggy Sabanskas, and Steve Farish. Also present was David Allen, City Council liaison, and Cyd Cannizzaro.

Staff present was Peggy Hawker, City Recorder/Special Projects Director.

CALL TO ORDER

Hawkyard called the meeting to order and everyone introduced themselves. He reported that the Task Force had previously discussed recycling and reusing, and tonight's discussion would focus on reducing.

REDUCE DISCUSSION

Hawkyard asked for suggestions on ways to reduce the use of single use shopping bags in the city. Farish stated that a city-wide ban on single use plastic grocery bags would be effective. Hawkyard asked whether a ban would achieve the goal, and expressed concern that people would shift to paper, while it is his hope that the shift would be to reusable bags. He noted that Seattle has a charge for using paper bags. Jones stated that a charge to use paper bags would be a tax, and if a ban is pushed, it must go to a vote of the people. Hawkyard disagreed that it has to be a tax, noting that the city needs to institute a mandatory fee to level the playing field. Jones stated that when the government imposes a fee; it is a tax.

Sabanskas discussed the cost of bags to different levels of retailers. She noted that she could look into recyclable bags.

Hawkyard noted that he could support moving away from non-compostable plastic bags as this is a socially important issue.

A regulation directed at major retailers, i.e., grocers, was discussed.

Farish noted that the Task Force was organized because a lot of people see a growing problem, and it is important to send a message about plastics in general.

Jones suggested concentrating on education, rather than a ban; doing things that make a statement, but are not arbitrary. Johnson stated that bans have not been productive, and that it is not the bag that is the problem; but rather the people. She added that plastics have a place and use. She noted that grocery bags are not necessarily single-

use bags; there are places to recycle plastic bags; a ban is not productive; and there is a need to educate people.

Jones stated that recycling places need to be made obvious, and added that there is a huge potential for reduction in the landfill. He suggested making the bag easier to recycle than throw away.

Allen noted that Thompson's Sanitary Service has been open to picking up bags from large retailers.

Hawkyard mentioned that Palo Alto, California had experience a two - three percent increase in recycling rates. He noted that part of the education process would be to provide incentives, and added that there is no incentive to doing something just because it's the right thing to do.

Allen asked what some effective educational tools would be, and suggested that this would be a good topic for the Task Force to discuss. Hawkyard agreed that this subject could be discussed at the next meeting at least as a sub-topic.

Johnson suggested education through signage noting that there are more bags on the beach than on the highways.

Jones noted that Lincoln County enjoys a higher recycling rate than most counties in the state because the county has made it easy to recycle items, and added that plastic bags need to be added to the recycling stream.

Sabanskas noted that branding is effective.

Cyd Cannizzaro noted that her previous job was to help businesses with recycling. She noted that there is a lack of focus on business recycling, and no city focus on sustainability recycling. She stated that compostable bags are of no use unless they are put into a municipal system. She added that bans don't work, but that it is better to explain why - providing education and getting buy-in from the public. She added that if the city had a sustainability statement or policy, it could be used to encourage a reduction in the use of plastic bags.

DEVELOP NEXT AGENDA AND SET MEETING DATE

It was agreed that the next agenda should include a discussion on education, with a synthesis of previous discussions in how they relate to tangible plans.

The next meeting will be held on July 26, 2012, at 5:30 P.M.

REDUCE DISCUSSION CONTINUED

Farish stated that he would like to revisit the possibility of a surcharge on any check-out bags. He suggested that the city could mandate a fee for a check-out bag and set up a program through the fees to distribute free reusable bags. Jones suggested that the haulers could put money into education efforts.

Farish asked where the recycled bags go. Cannizzaro stated that people get excited when they see where recycling goes, and the key is to find ways of reduction without shaming people. Allen encouraged Cannizzaro to contact the haulers regarding education.

Cannizzaro suggested the city add a requirement for a glass route to its solid waste franchise.

Jones suggested that perhaps OSU could assist. Allen stated that he would touch bases with HMSC for ideas on potential involvement, and the naming of a point person.

Cannizzaro stated that a certain amount of the tipping fees must be directed toward education. She noted that she prefers an educational approach rather than a mandate.

Jones stated that there is a sanitation issue with reusable bags.

Howard stated that one of the problems is retailers only placing a few items in each bag. Allen noted that in these situations, the customer should be proactive.

Cannizzaro suggested a "Recycle@Work Program" to educate businesses, and the businesses could educate its employees.

Sabanskas suggested contacting the Small Business Development Center at OCCC.

Johnson displayed a tissue box with plastic bags that she had folded and placed in the box. She noted that the bags have many uses.

Allen noted that if the Task Force needs additional time, he believes that the City Council would be amenable to an extension of time to complete the task.

It was reiterated that the next meeting should include a global view of the conversations that have occurred, and an attempt to develop a statement that could be put on a list of recommendations to the City Council.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:55 P.M.