

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Technical Advisory Subcommittee Meeting

Wednesday, November 5, 2008, 11:00 am

Department of Public Works, Environmental Programs Division, Large Conference Room

I. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. Those in attendance were: Emiko Thompson, Hossam Banna, Nilda Gemeniano, Iwen Tseng, and Christine Frias with the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works; Matthew Dodson with the California Grocers Association; Burt Kumagawa with the County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office; Stephen Joseph with Save the Plastic Bag coalition; Jennifer Forkish with Ek & Ek; Christine Flowers with Keep California Beautiful; Anita Jimenez with the City of Santa Fe Springs; Sharron Jackson with Progressive Bag Affiliates; and Robert Bateman with Roplast Industries.

II. Program Status

a. Checklists Received

Ms. Iwen Tseng provided an update on the checklists received from stores. In October, members of the subcommittee agreed that calling the stores would ensure that program packets and checklists were received by the stores. Upon concurrence by Mr. Matthew Dodson of the California Grocers Association (CGA), Public Works began calling the 121 unincorporated County area stores during the week of October 20, 2008, and completed contacting the stores within two weeks. As a result eight additional checklists were received. Of the newly received eight checklists, six were from large supermarkets who indicated that many of the program components were already in place at those stores. The additional two checklists were from smaller stores who indicated that they do not currently have any reusable bags for sale. The new total number of checklists received is eleven.

For the stores' convenience Public Works will set up an online checklist submittal feature which will be available on www.Bragaboutyourbag.com.

b. Cities Participation

Ms. Nilda Gemeniano reported that Public Works continues to assist cities by providing them with resources to help find store information within their jurisdiction. Public Works has also been in contact with other cities that were interested in the program, such as the Cities of Pomona and Burbank.

Ms. Anita Jimenez provided an update on the City of Santa Fe Springs' efforts. Ms. Jimenez reported that their City Council previously adopted a resolution to join the County's bag program and is now developing letters to stand with the County's checklist and bag resource packet to begin working with individual stores.

III. Program Development

a. Store Updates

Ms. Emiko Thompson reported that at the previous subcommittee meeting it was established that making direct contact with stores, through store site visits, would help promote store participation in this Program.

Store visits would allow for discussions about the program directly with store managers, as well as provide for answering any questions, gaining insight on what the stores are already doing, and understanding the barriers that might make it difficult for stores to incorporate some of the components of the Program.

Public works proposes to deploy 3 to 4 teams of their in-house staff to visit each of the unincorporated area stores. A questionnaire is being prepared for stakeholder review so that all are aware of the questions being asked. After finalizing the questionnaire the teams will begin visiting the stores. Public Works will continue to keep the subcommittee updated on this effort.

Ms. Thompson also provided an update on the recycling of plastic bags at stores. The American Chemistry Council (ACC) provided their outreach material, which includes a toolkit that describes how to implement a plastic bag recycling program at stores, where to place bins, display signage, market information, window posters, and bin signs. Public Works received permission from the ACC and CGA to begin distributing them to stores for their use.

b. Discussion on Proposed Contract Components Pertaining to Technical Advisory

To assist each of the subcommittees and the working group in accomplishing the various tasks for this program, Public Works proposes to develop a contract for some of the program activities.

The consultant would provide technical assistance on at-store plastic bag recycling programs; provide plastic bag consumption and at-store recycling data; develop performance measurements and indicators that reflect the program outcomes; analyze the program's disposal reduction rate methodology and recommend any adjustments; research ways to work with the State and other experts to develop and expand the recycling market infrastructure; as well as maximize the recycled content of paper and plastic bags.

Jennifer Forkish commented that she wanted to ensure that there is emphasis on the recycling of plastics in efforts that the County is undertaking with its waste management practices in its own departmental facilities. Mr. Hossam Banna stated that the County has already begun this effort through its Departmental Recycling Program which involves program consultants reviewing department waste management practices as well as providing the appropriate infrastructure.

Regarding the analysis of the Program's disposal reduction rate methodology Ms. Forkish stated that she also wanted to know how and where this subcommittee would be collecting data to gauge an accurate reduction rate

methodology. Ms. Thompson stated that this is one area that a consultant may be able to assist and supplement the subcommittee's efforts. A consultant may be able to enhance the reduction rate methodology as well as make any recommendations on the components to ensure that the rate is reflective of the disposal reduction. Public Works will follow up with Ms. Forkish to begin working on the type of data that would be suitable (i.e. specific tonnage amounts, location, and timeframe from which we want to pull the data).

Mr. Robert Bateman commented on the development of PCR suitable for film versus the recycling of plastic bags. Currently, many recycled bags are not used to manufacture post-consumer resin. Mr. Bateman further stated that although the availability of PCR for plastic film is not encouraging, it may change as there are several fronts underway. Mr. Bateman stated that reusable plastic bags cannot put in forty percent PCR right now. However, the problem is not finding the PCR, but rather having the valid certification of PCR, as there are differing standards between paper and plastic. This is an issue that should be noted.

In regard to the development of PCR for film, Mr. Bateman commented that it needs to be taken into account that the plastic bag industry automatically uses what the paper industry uses to qualify as PCR so it may need to be considered when setting percentage targets for PCR use. Secondly, the subcommittee needs to bare in mind the question of whether what is being claimed to be PCR really is PCR. With plastic there is another aim which is to use plastic generated in California. Claims by imported bags are difficult to verify, and does not encourage waste recycling in California.

Finally, Mr. Bateman stated that one shouldn't be discouraged with the apparent lack of availability of PCR as there are ways that this can be improved dramatically if this subcommittee encourages and makes a point for the public to use PCR.

A discussion ensued and the subcommittee recognized that the use of plastic reusable bags such as those manufactured by Roplast Industries should be recognized and posted on the Brag About Your Bag® website as a viable option. The subcommittee also recognized the need to research the current standards used in calculating the PCR content between the paper and plastic bag industries as a means of understanding the differences and potential inequities in their calculation.

c. Open Discussion on Program Development

IV. Next Steps

The next Technical Advisory Subcommittee meeting will be held on December 16, 2008.