



# Green Team Committee Minutes

Wednesday, November 10, 2010, 7:00pm  
Hamilton Senior High School Cafeteria  
2955 S. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90034

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## I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00.

**Committee Members Present:** Larry Hess, Bette Billet, Paula Waxman, Barry Levine, Sherilyn Correa, Phyllis Rothman, Saran Kirschbaum, Anne Geffner, Sophie Trauberman, Karen Smith Laramay, Matthew Lewis, Sherri Lester, Sara Jean Lipmen, Mark Waxman, Charles Miller, Nan Joo Kim, Sarah Leider, Ruth Askren, Misha Askren, Eli Lipmen

**Guests:** David Giron, Jennifer Forkish, Kristen James

Discussion of old business items.

## II. New Business

**Jennifer Forkish, American Chemistry Council** spoke on behalf of those who feel that an ordinance to ban single-use plastic bags would not be good for the State of California. **See position paper attached.**

**Kristen James, Heal the Bay** spoke on behalf of those who feel that an ordinance to ban single-use plastic bags would benefit the State of California. **See position paper attached.**

After presentations and a question and answer period,

It was moved that the South Robertson Neighborhoods Council Green Team Committee recommend that the Soronc Board write to The City Council in support of the following motion pending before the City Council: "...that the Bureau of Sanitation be instructed to report back to the City Council with the next steps necessary to implement a citywide ban of single-use plastic bags, and include in that report the status of the County's Environmental Impact Report and the State's Master Environmental Assessment that relate to single-use plastic bags."

**The motion passed: Yes 19, No 1, Abstain 0**

## III. Old Business

The Green Team and Hamilton S.A.F.E. Club would like to put on another E-Waste Drive. The date will be sometime in December or January and to be determined by the S.A.F.E. Club members.

## V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

**Doug Fitzsimmons**  
President

**Brian Kite**  
Vice-President

**Gerald Chavarria**  
Secretary

**Terrence Gomes**  
Treasurer

**South Robertson  
Neighborhoods Council**

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November 11, 2010

The Honorable Gloria Molina  
Chair, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisor Molina:

The American Chemistry Council (ACC) must respectfully oppose the proposed ordinance that would (1) prohibit grocery and other retail outlets from providing customers with fully recyclable plastic bags and; (2) require those same stores to charge customers \$0.10 for each paper bag.

In our view, enactment of this ordinance would:

- Unnecessarily raise grocery costs for county residents and disadvantage smaller markets;
- Create a troubling policy precedent in that the county is establishing a mandated consumer charge for a commodity yet receiving no revenue;
- Potentially put at risk several hundred manufacturing jobs in the county;
- Ironically result in the dismantling of a local plastics recycling infrastructure that has been steadily diverting more material from disposal each year and;
- Require the county to spend scarce resources to implement these new requirements, audit the collection of bag tax revenue and ensure overall compliance.

#### **HIGHER GROCERY COSTS FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS**

As drafted, the ordinance allows stores to continue to provide paper bags free of charge to customers that may be on public assistance. This exemption acknowledges the ordinance is a financial burden to some however those that may be unemployed, single parents, seniors, or families that may be struggling to make ends meet are overlooked. The proposed bag tax will unnecessarily raise grocery costs for county residents.

#### **NO REVENUE STREAM FOR THE COUNTY, WHICH INCURS NEW IMPLEMENTATION COSTS**

The ordinance language requires stores to keep all of the revenue generated from the \$0.10 customers must pay for a paper bag in part to help offset operating costs for these higher priced bags. No part of the fee is directed to the county to cover the additional costs of creating, monitoring and auditing the program and flow of money. In addition, the fee will impact large and small grocers differently, because larger grocers can likely use buying power to obtain better prices (perhaps even less than \$0.10) than smaller, neighborhood markets.

#### **LOCAL MANUFACTURING JOBS AT RISK**

Southern California is home to several plastic bag manufacturing facilities, employing several hundred residents. Passage of this ordinance could put those jobs at risk, not to mention the hundreds of other jobs associated with suppliers and vendors. With the local unemployment rate near 13%, it is incomprehensible that an ordinance that may put more local residents out of work is being considered.

#### **PLASTIC BAG/FILM RECYCLING IS INCREASING**

Allegations that plastic bag and film recycling is failing are false. At the request of the Los Angeles County Public Works (LACPW) Department, ACC recently commissioned a study by Moore Recycling Associates, Inc. to:

1) quantify the pounds of plastic bags and film collected for recycling from material recovery facilities (MRFs) in the county from 2007 through 2009; 2) delineate the percentage of plastic bags collected versus total film; and 3) determine how much of the total film was from the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

- The study reveals a 39 percent growth in the recycling of plastic bags and other film plastics (see *examples below*).
- The recycling of plastic bags alone grew 62 percent during this period suggesting that residents have become accustomed to putting their plastic bags into their curbside recycling bins.
- In the unincorporated areas of the county, curbside collection of plastic bags and film increased by 40 percent from 2007 to 2009.

In addition to local curbside collection programs, California law requires all large grocery stores and pharmacies to provide a recycling bin for plastic bags. These bins provide a statewide consumer infrastructure that can capture not only recyclable plastic grocery bags but newspaper, dry cleaning, toiletry, and other bags and film as well (e.g., product wraps for cases of soda, paper towels, etc.). Ironically, if plastic bags are banned, the stores in affected jurisdictions could simply opt out of providing and servicing the bins and thus eliminate a convenient consumer recycling infrastructure. This was the case after the City of San Francisco banned plastic bags. Passage of this ordinance would have the perverse effect of dismantling a local and convenient recycling infrastructure.

### **WHAT ABOUT REUSE?**

Surveys consistently show that most people “reuse” their plastic grocery bags for multiple purposes such as picking up pet waste, lining home trash cans or carrying damp clothes. A ban on this product will require consumers to purchase new plastic bags for these very same uses.

### **NEW BUREAUCRACY, NEW COUNTY SPENDING REQUIRED**

Under the proposed ordinance, county staff will be required to spend time and resources to oversee implementation of this program, ensure compliance and to audit the collection and accounting of money collected from a “bag tax.” With on-going cost pressures and budget reductions to county services, it is arguably a questionable use of taxpayer money to create a “bag bureaucracy” when other, more cost-effective bag policy options are available.

### **THE PROPOSED ORDINANCE IS UNNECESSARY....REAL SOLUTIONS ARE AVAILABLE**

Reducing bag litter and waste can be accomplished by limiting unnecessary bagging, enhancing and promoting recycling programs and encouraging consumers to use reusable bags. ACC and its members have consistently been willing to work toward this goal and, in fact, sponsored legislation by Assembly Member Charles Calderon (D-Whittier) last legislative session that would have created an annual fund of nearly \$25 million – paid for by bag manufacturers – to support recycling and storm water pollution prevention programs statewide.

We believe there are more consumer and business friendly ways of reducing bag litter and waste that do not result in raising grocery costs for families, put at risk manufacturing jobs in the Los Angeles area, or require more government bureaucracy. It is for these reasons ACC urges you to oppose this proposed ordinance.

Sincerely,



Tim Shestek  
Senior Director, State Affairs  
American Chemistry Council

cc: Members, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
Executive Officer

Attachment: Plastic Bag and Film Recycling Data Report for Los Angeles County



November 5, 2010

Los Angeles County Supervisors  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
Via email: Sachi Hamai, Executive Officer (shamai@bos.lacounty.gov)

RE: Support of Draft Single-use Bag Ordinance

Dear Los Angeles County Supervisors:

On behalf of Heal the Bay we write in strong support of the Draft Single-use Bag Ordinance (Draft Ordinance) released on October 28, 2010. The Draft Ordinance offers a comprehensive approach to address single-use bag pollution and will deter consumption of all single-use bags distributed at the point of sale at supermarkets, large retail pharmacies and food marts. The Draft closely resembles AB 1998 (Brownley) which the County supported in the past legislative session.

In January 2008, the Supervisors put stores on notice that significant bag reductions needed to occur or else the County would move forward with a ban. As significant reductions have not been realized, the time has come to ban plastic bags in Los Angeles County.

Plastic bags are the most ubiquitous consumer item designed to last for minutes but persist in our marine environment for hundreds of years. Approximately 60 to 80% of all marine debris and 90% of floating debris is plastic and comes from mostly land-based sources.<sup>1</sup> This plastic pollution poses a persistent threat to marine life. Over 267 species worldwide have been impacted by plastic litter.<sup>2</sup>

Los Angeles County residents use an estimated 6 billion single-use plastic bags every year. As proven over the last three years, we cannot recycle our way out of this problem and urgent action is needed to help reduce this pollution. Despite efforts to expand recycling programs, less than 5% of single-use plastic bags are currently being recycled.<sup>3</sup> The rest of these bags inevitably end up in our landfills or as litter, clogging stormdrain systems, and make their way to our waterways and ocean.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Gordon (2006) "Eliminating Land-based Discharges of Marine Debris in California: A Plan of Action from The Plastic Debris Project," Prepared by the California Coastal Commission (Available at: [www.plasticdebris.org/CA\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2006.pdf](http://www.plasticdebris.org/CA_Action_Plan_2006.pdf)).

<sup>2</sup> D.W. Laist (1997) "Impacts of marine debris: entanglement of marine life in marine debris including a comprehensive list of species with entanglement and ingestion records" In Coe, J.M., Rogers, D.B. (Eds.), *Marine Debris—Sources, Impacts, and Solutions*: Springer-Verlag, New York, 99-139.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2005 Characterization of Municipal Solid Waste, Table 7; California Assembly Bill 2449 (Levine), statutes of 2007.



The cleanup of litter from single-use bags puts an additional strain on our economy. One study has estimated that the taxpayer cost to subsidize the recycling, collection, and disposal of plastic and paper bags could amount to as much as 17 cents per bag.<sup>4</sup> This figure does not include the additional costs that local governments incur annually for cleaning littered streets, beaches and installing trash control devices to comply with total maximum daily load limits (TMDLs) for trash under the Clean Water Act. Also, plastic bags can clog catch basin inserts and screens thereby increasing local flood risks. The County of Los Angeles spends approximately \$4 million each year to cleanup 31 miles of beach.<sup>5</sup> Littered streets and beaches also threaten California's ocean economy, valued at \$43 billion. An estimated 408,000 jobs mostly in the tourism and recreation sectors are tied to the ocean economy.<sup>6</sup>

We support the selection of Alternative 5 as the Environmentally Superior Alternative and the basis of the Draft Ordinance. Of note we believe that the Draft Ordinance will not result in any negative environmental impacts, as it will actually lead to an increase in the use of reusable bags that are a more sustainable alternative to single-use bags. The cost associated with paper bags should avoid any increase in their usage and GHG increases. Thus there will be no significant cumulative impacts.

The County made the commitment in 2008 to move forward with a plastic bag ban if reduction targets were not met. As the targets were clearly not met, the Supervisors must follow-through on the initial action. Los Angeles County has a critical role to play in becoming a true leader in eliminating plastic bag waste and preventing the proliferation of plastic pollution in our communities. The passage of the Draft Ordinance will be a major step in breaking our addiction to single-use bags.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical environmental issue,

Mark Gold, D. Env.  
President

Kirsten James  
Water Quality Director

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<sup>4</sup> City of San Francisco Dept of the Environment "[Bag Cost Analysis](#)" (Nov.18, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Draft Santa Monica Bay Nearshore and Offshore Debris TMDL. Accessed 11/2/2010.

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