

MINUTES

Mayor's Sustainable Business Initiative Task Force
Roundtable—Growing the Reuse and Recycling Sectors
Community Conference Room—Fire Station #1
Eugene, Oregon

October 13, 2005
1:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Rusty Rexius, Mayor's Sustainable Business Initiative Task Force Co-Chair; Julie Daniel, Terry McDonald, Karyn Kaplan, Lorraine Kerwood, Jack Hoech, Lorena Young, Oren Posner, Alex Cuyler, Anne Donahue, Pete Chism, Scott Bales, Jessica Chanay, participants; Mike Simms, Sandra Bishop, Kevin Jones, Bob Barrow, Bob Cassidy, observers; Jack Macy, Gary Liss, presenters (via speakerphone), Lynn Feekin, Randy Ross, Sustainable Business Initiative Task Force; Bob Doppelt, Sara Mazze, Ray Neff, University of Oregon.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Rexius welcomed participants and observers to the roundtable. Those present introduced themselves.

2. Background on SBI

Mr. Rexius said the Sustainable Business Initiative had three focuses: education about the meaning of sustainability, business assistance regarding sustainability, and job creation and job expansion in sustainable niches. The roundtables were being sponsored by the Sustainable Business Initiative Task Force for the purpose of gathering information. The task force hoped to draw from the participants' expertise with the goal of developing an action plan to forward to the mayor and City Council.

At the request of Mr. Rexius, those present introduced themselves.

3. Agenda and Presentations by Jack Macy and Gary Liss

Mr. Doppelt briefly reviewed the agenda.

Mr. Doppelt noted the interviews conducted by University graduate students prior to the roundtable, and shared the results of those interviews, noting that a report based on the interviews had been mailed to participants prior to the roundtable.

Practitioners Vision:

- A few discussed Zero Waste
- Others said Zero Waste would require lots of coordination and go beyond Eugene
- Still others said addressing food waste, wood, paper, and e-waste should be the goal but did not mention Zero Waste

Possible Opportunities:

- Plastic waste recovery
- E-waste
- Food waste
- Paper and wood waste recovery

Constraints:

- City/County under funded
- Zero Waste requires working ‘up and down’ value chain
- May need to restructure some parts of local waste management systems
- Lack of Regional Coordination of waste management systems
- Some recyclables (e.g. e-waste) must be sent to Portland
- Limited funding for reuse/recycling businesses
- Lack of markets
- Lack of government incentives/regulations

Possible Initial Actions:

- Organize county/region wide discussion about Zero Waste
- Increase public education and information to commercial ventures
- Expand food composting processes
- Provide incentives to increase commercial recycling before considering regulations (e.g. recycled content in purchasing, and land fill bans)

Mr. Doppelt asked those present to consider whether it made sense to have Zero Waste as a local goal. Ms. Mazze recorded the responses:

- Is it achieved by source separation or expensive technology?
- Trying to fight the global market in developing products that can be completely recycled/reused is quite a task, so don't know how much of an effect a small community can have on that

Those present heard a brief presentation from consultant Gary Liss on the topic of Zero Waste. The presenter's comments were recorded by Ms. Mazze.

- Definition—71 tons are left upstream for every ton that reaches the landfill--emphasis on resource management, not waste management, reducing and eliminating waste
- Zero Waste International Alliance website (www.zwia.org) to promote positive alternatives to traditional waste management and raise community awareness
- Provided examples in Powerpoint presentation of businesses moving towards zero waste
Examples:
 - Fetzer, Pillsbury (over 90 percent waste reductions)
 - Xerox
 - Larry's Market
 - San Diego Wild Animal Park

- Many local governments, e.g., many New Zealand cities, Halifax, Seattle
- Restaurants in San Francisco – high level of composting
- Is zero waste attainable? Nature as the model
- Businesses are showing the way--target of Zero Waste with 90 percent waste diversion helps businesses design waste out, eliminate waste, and reuse/recycle, or compost the remainder
- Zero Waste should save money for businesses from product/process improvements
- Failure to design for Zero Waste results in more upstream waste and impacts from manufacturing
- One driver for Zero Waste: limited landfill liability – private operators are only responsible for landfills 30 years after closure – after that no one was in charge and gas and leachate can result
- Lewiston example—reuse jobs – 10,000 tons e-waste = 296 jobs a year
- How to achieve Zero Waste?
 - Set goals, plan for them, use incentives and subsidies
 - Focus on reduce/reuse—designing waste out, producer responsibility, take-back programs

Those present heard a brief presentation from Jack Macy of the City of San Francisco about that community's efforts.

- Goal of Zero waste by 2020
- Realizing 77 percent now—includes residential/commercial/industrial
- Mixed recycling, composting, commercial sector and tech assistance
- Green business program, includes business assistance and recognition awards
- Need to increase participation, possibly through mandatory approach—emphasis is now on working with businesses to meet their needs
- Waste prevention, reuse, recycling are critical—constantly looking to add new materials and encourage recycling market development
- Look to encourage and support businesses using recycled feedstock and buying recycled products—work with service providers to improve system
- Incentives to businesses are important, including rates
- Encourage more consumer and producer responsibility—example: work with producers on using compostable cups
- Zero Waste is used as a framework for sustainability efforts across the board

Responding to questions from participants, Mr. Macy made the following points.

- As a result of difficulties with NorCal, the reuse stream has decreased in San Francisco; however, there are other opportunities for San Francisco to support and partner with nonprofits such as Saint Vincent's and capture more materials for reuse
- Increased food recovery is important to consider

- San Francisco recently attempted to impose a 17 cent charge on plastic bags but political opposition appears to have stopped the effort – likely to have a recovery target instead of fee
- Rates are structured to ensure recycling is provided for free and composting at a discount
- Diversion incentives exist for Norcal companies based on achieving certain goals in reducing waste in the landfill—hitting the goals leads to a higher profit margin for companies
- Fantastic Three Program recently offered to residents—curbside single-stream commingling including compostables—the projected cost of implementing included the cost of a new fleet of trucks, and the marginal increase was about six percent of the \$12 monthly residential service charge
- Landfill tipping fees are about \$20/ton and the transfer station fees are about \$100/ton (includes landfill fee)
- San Francisco is unlikely to realize a goal of 100 percent participation as long as people were offered a landfill container

Mr. Doppelt thanked Mr. Liss and Mr. Macy and indicated would share Mr. Liss' Powerpoint presentation with meeting attendees.

Mr. Doppelt asked participants to consider what was possible in Eugene. Participants made the following comments.

- Zero Waste provides a framework for system creation—the result of reuse will be job creation—Zero Waste or darn close is a good motto
- We know our waste composition but our price signals are “messed up” across the disposal and collection infrastructure in terms of incentivization for haulers and generators
- Businesses exist that want these resources—identify know vendors and dealers, communicate/educate public sector, chamber, and media, they can be drivers- market as driver as opposed to mandates. Revenue streams generated by reuse and savings can help pay for the effort and changes in practice
- Emphasize the importance of the market
- Form consortium to let business community know what exists
- Consider nonprofits, e.g., Food for Lane County (FFLC), and the food diversion/recovery done by that agency, which saves money in landfill fees—there is more opportunity to do more food recovery, but lacks the resources to collect all that exists
- If businesses save money as a result of FFLC efforts, they could contribute to FFLC and/or there could be rebate to FFLC for waste diversion
Catchment concept is important—the degree to which we can encourage regional collection creates new jobs
- Encourage businesses to collect resources from region as a whole to create jobs and get materials in one place for marketing
- Lane County operates 16 drop off waste sites and partners with/nonprofit organizations
- Need to recognize that markets are changing and help keep developing markets alive. Possibility of providing incentives to new markets?

- Must identify those new markets
- Businesses need technical assistance with recycling—small things like a lack of space frequently keep businesses from recycling
- Most large organizations could fund position to deal with waste stream, but smaller businesses need more help
- Businesses should be separating waste at the source, e.g., e-waste
- Zero Waste couched as a measure of sustainability could bring some focus to local efforts

Mr. Doppelt asked if participants believed there were access problems to materials and markets, and what small businesses needed in that regard.

- Use the EWEB model for energy audit - show how to save \$ by diverting waste
- This would help identify products/markets
- Larena @ Weyerhaeuser does waste audits and master recyclers do audits
- Lots of information isn't getting to people – example of DEQ incentives
- Density/cost of transportation can be barrier
- Pick “low hanging” fruit – focus on known waste sources
- Note Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) program with focus on avoidance—use the DEQ as model for technical assistance by helping businesses eliminate waste through design—further information can be found on the DEQ website
- Key to success would be a local person to manage effort
- Note audits offered by haulers for companies in return for credit on bill
- Focus first on raising awareness of recyclables/reusables/markets

Mr. Doppelt asked how a local effort would be funded and staffed.

- Funding? – Raise tipping fees—brings “fruit lower”
- Without a developed market, resources, and assistance increased tipping fees hurt everyone because everyone pays a higher tipping fee whether they recycle or not
- Need more fix-it shops
- Need audits for businesses, and shared knowledge on who accepts what materials
- Reuse and Recycling – smaller businesses want to recycle but don't have resources to deal with their e-waste
- Making connections would help—need more publicity/network
- Citywide review of what was currently occurring
- Need to consider marginalized communities and job creation
- \$1 or \$6 tax on waste to fund a public program?
- City has SMART program, but people don't want to hear from City
- Approach County commissioners to fund?
- See conflict in funding Zero Waste effort through tipping fees
- You pay “rent” for landfill space—waste is a choice--fees act as a disincentive for waste and incentive for reuse/recycling etc.
- Focus on upstream waste
- Hard to educate nationwide stores on local programs related to waste reduction
- City can lobby Salem/State/Feds for additional regulations
- Zero Waste forces examination of whole waste stream versus only the biggest sections

- Consider new City policies ordinances—example, San Francisco bottle bill, German green packaging law, University of Oregon Styrofoam ban
- Train people in repair—Lane Community College?
- Broadcast City public service announcements regarding reduce/reuse
- Encourage media public interest stories on reduce/reuse, businesses
- Policy – tax/hinder major contributors to waste stream—promote/support value added, repair

Mr. Doppelt asked participants to consider the issue raised in light of the filter of social equity.

- Give value to jobs that tend to be tactile and repetitive by building the cost of decent wages into the rate structure or by adding value to products removed from the waste stream
- Form a consortium of small businesses to build economics of scale
- Catchment of product can help with increasing scale
- Equipment tax deductions
- New Market Tax Credit Program—federal program—borrow at low rates and for low-income people/communities
- Micro entrepreneurs repairing goods from BRING
- Need markets, more materials, more training
- Lane Micro Business Enterprise could assist
- How can repair shops complete? Catchment – pull out most valuable products

Mr. Doppelt solicited comments from the observers.

- Need different tactics for individual big and small businesses—small incentives can be important to small businesses—big businesses needs regulation
- Examine markets so that you're in incentivizing and not subsidizing
- Education and communication—inexpensive and effective
- Update information available
- Zero Waste needs to account for infrastructure use – also fuel, transportation etc.
- Remember that tipping fees are decided by County, collection fees by City.
- Consider social justice
- Rather than raising tipping fees, find other funding—economic development dollars?

Mr. Rexius thanked those present for their participation, and determined there was interest in holding a follow-up roundtable. He adjourned the meeting at 3:33 p.m.

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)