

**Sierra Vista Environmental Stewardship Commission (ESC)  
Recycling Work Group Minutes**

**Thursday, March 14, 2024 (3:30-5:30pm)  
Sierra Vista Library Conference Room**

**Attendees:** Joelle Buffa, ESC Commissioner and Recycling Work Group Coordinator  
Steve Spearman, ESC Commissioner  
Bob Poynter (non-voting ESC member)  
Betty Poynter (non-voting ESC member)  
William Indelicato (non-voting ESC member) (via Zoom)  
Tom Runyon (interested community member)  
Karen LeMay (non-voting ESC member and Work Group Secretary)

**Introductions:** Each attendee introduced themselves and shared their favorite way to reduce, reuse or recycle waste.

**A Bit of History:** Joelle mentioned a few things she had gleaned from listening to the recorded minutes of the Environmental Affairs Committee (predecessor to ESC) that was active prior to Covid. The City of Sierra Vista website has agendas and recordings of meetings in 2019-2020. This was the period when curbside recycling pickup was stopped and the drop-off station at the SV Transfer Station was implemented (and later cancelled due to lack of public participation). One take-away from these meetings was a comment from the committee's City Council Liaison that the (then) mayor wanted this committee to know that the City hasn't given up on recycling, and when it becomes more cost effective or we figure out a better way, we can reconsider it; periodically bringing it up on the Council agenda is therefore important.

**City Recycling Website Revisions:** Betty talked about her research to update the City's "What and Where to Recycle" website page. She is looking into each recycling item's currently listed disposal location (Sierra Vista transfer station, Bisbee recycling center, fire stations, hardware stores, Best Buy, Staples, etc.) by visiting each location and asking questions, which has been more effective than communicating over the phone. Betty will submit a detailed report to ESC with suggested changes and additions for the public website.

**Update on "Let's Recycle":** Bob (and Betty) met with Matt Gurney, Bisbee Public Works Director, and Mike Gastelum, Sanitation & Recycling Supervisor, to get an understanding of how Bisbee's City-run recycling program continues while Sierra Vista stopped theirs. One finding was the revenue stream generated by the \$81.24 (current amount) annual recycling fee charged to Bisbee residents for trash pickup. Bisbee made the decision that responsibility for recycling services would be continued by the City of Bisbee, whereas Sierra Vista made the decision to allow residential recycling responsibilities to be assumed by the private sector. Joelle added that Recyclops is currently the only curbside recycling service in our area, with around 625 total customers - about 1 % of households.

Bob talked about how the recycling market collapsed in 2018 when China stopped purchasing other country's recyclables. Even with some companies working on repurposing and other solutions, the monetary value of recyclables has not been restored. One problem is the transporting distance to the processing centers. With Bisbee's 20 years of recycling experience, they found that separating, compressing and baling similar items cuts down on transport costs.

After studying the Bisbee operation, the idea of "Let's Recycle" was conceived. A flow chart illustrating the concept "Let's Recycle" - a private/public partnership involving a 501 (c)3 - was explained to the group. Let's Recycle would complement, not replace, the existing private curbside service operated by Recyclops. With input from the Bisbee Public Works personnel, Bob created a physical model of a recycling drop-off station that he demonstrated at this meeting. Central locations such as the Sierra Vista mall or Safeway parking lot could be potential public drop-off locations, especially if the items could be transported to a nearby area to compress and bale sorted recyclables for transport to Tucson. Empty multi-axle trailer trucks have been noted leaving Fort Huachuca, possibly traveling back to Tucson. This led Bob to identify the Fort as a potential partner in his Let's Recycle flow chart.

William added that he thinks Fort Huachuca may be interested in forming a recycling program, especially with their 30-year plan for the base being worked on now.

Bob also spoke about the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) Hub & Spoke program, which Bisbee is involved in.

Tom spoke about the successful Sedona Recycles program and his experience starting a recycling center for Davis-Monthan's pollution prevention program.

Bob also talked about how Patagonia residents requested the drop-off recycling services be returned to their community. With this public support, Republic Services (operator of the materials recovery facility in Tucson) now delivers two roll-off containers, one day a week behind the Patagonia post office, and then delivers the containers to Tucson for sorting and processing.

**Action Items for Next Meeting:**

1. Bob and Betty will give a presentation on Bisbee's recycling program and "Let's Recycle" at the March 27<sup>th</sup> ESC meeting.
2. William will research whether Fort Huachuca may be interested in a recycling program.
3. Betty will continue her work on recommendations for updating the City's recycling website.
4. Joelle will work with Sierra Vista Herald on an article about the Recycling Work Group using talking points recently reviewed by Sharon and the City PAO.

5. Tom will find current contacts for Sedona Recycles and look further onto how their operation works.
6. ESC Recycling Work Group to recommend a stronger commitment and more specific goals for Vista 2040 Environmental Sustainability Proposed Goals and Strategies Goal 5 – Support opportunities to recycle, reduce, and reuse. Joelle will draft some ideas and circulate to the group present.
7. Karen will draft meeting minutes and submit them to Joelle for review, corrections and delivery to Work Group members and SV staff liaison.