

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

**Thursday, May 16, 2024 (3:30-5:05pm)  
Sierra Vista Library Small Conference Room**

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

**Introductions:**

Each attendee introduced themselves and shared what plastic item they wished was *never* invented. Responses were:

- plastic bags
- packing peanuts
- single-serve coffee pods
- plastic food clamshells (replacing paper/cardboard)
- thin film plastics
- cosmetics packaged in plastic
- mylar balloons

**Sierra Vista 2040 General Plan:**

The group was glad to see many (but not all) of our recycling comments accepted into the draft of the Vista 2040 General Plan. The City is having a public meeting on May 29<sup>th</sup> to discuss the General Plan and requested that someone from the ESC be present to answer questions about the new recycling sections of the plan. Also, we discussed encouraging friends to attend the public hearing or write to the City to voice their approval of more recycling services.

**Open Meeting Law and Group Communication:**

Joelle led the discussion of how this work group should be communicating with each other outside of meetings. Per Open Meeting Law, public bodies must conduct meetings openly to inform the public of matters discussed or decided. Everyone agreed it was a fine line between “discussion” and “informing”. It was agreed that all email communications sent out within the work group be addressed to one person (on the “to” line) and other members bcc’ed; recipients “respond to sender” to avoid deliberation/discussion among the group.

**ESC/City Interaction:**

Since the ESC will have a new Council Liaison appointed to our commission in January 2025, the group discussed ways we could proactively influence the choice of our next liaison. One suggestion was to attend upcoming debates of new City Council candidates to get to know them by asking questions about environmental issues. Another suggestion was to attend City Council meetings and chat one-on-one with Council members after the meeting to determine if they are supportive, and better yet, passionate about being a steward of the environment. It would be helpful to learn more about how and who makes Commission liaison assignments so we can be effective.

### **Debrief of April Work Group Presentation to ESC:**

The group discussed how the Let's Recycle presentation was received at the April 24<sup>th</sup> ESC meeting. The hand-made recycled cardboard binders were a great touch, and an icebreaker to the presentation. Unfortunately, there were only a few minutes left before the end of the meeting to discuss the plan with the liaisons.

Our Staff Liaison said (direct words from transcription of ESC meeting) "the 501c3 is the new twist on this ... I have to consider that side of it a little bit more and process all of this information." Our Council Liaison said (direct words from transcription of ESC meeting) "If the 501c3 takes the ball and runs with it, that takes the City out of the equation. The only thing we would have to do is possibly some support services, maybe a place to have this. We would not be able to support financially this venture, I can tell you that".

It was decided that future recycling presentations by Work Group members:

- should be timed and kept on schedule by the Chair running the meeting or someone else, and
- should be practiced and critiqued before the Work Group prior to the ESC or City Council, and
- all Work Group members should have sufficient time to review and comment on any written materials distributed prior to the presentation, and
- should represent ideas of all members.

### **Thoughts on Starting & Running a Non-Profit:**

In anticipation of the Let's Recycle concept moving forward with a nonprofit, Karen gave a presentation on forming an IRS Section 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, as she has experience with creating and running nonprofits.

The advantages for an organization of being a nonprofit with IRS tax-exempt status are (generally):

- ability to apply for and receive certain grants
- to be exempt from paying income tax on revenue
- possibility of income tax deductions for certain donors

Achieving tax-exempt status with the IRS is a lengthy, two-step process. Before beginning the paperwork, major questions to be answered are identifying corporate officers, finding funds for set-up costs, a physical Arizona address, and mission statement. First step is to form an Arizona nonprofit corporation through Arizona Corporation Commission. After that step is complete, the process of applying for an IRS tax-exempt determination (40-page IRS Form 1023) must be completed and filed for approval. The estimated filing time for both steps is 5-16 months, the filing fee estimate is about \$1,500, and the legal services fee (if pro bono attorney is not used) is about \$5,000.

Joelle spoke to the Legacy Foundation about what their organization could do for Let's Recycle. (Legacy Foundation is a local nonprofit that works with local organizations, schools, and governments to promote population health and community wellness.) Joelle was told that Commissioners, because they are appointed by the City Council, are eligible to participate in certain Legacy Foundation events, such as nonprofit training. The Legacy's Resource Guide, containing a wide array of helpful information for groups such as ours, is available to all on their website: [legacyfoundationresourceguide.org/home](http://legacyfoundationresourceguide.org/home)

### **Reflect on Let's Recycle strategy / discuss recycling options to bring forward to ESC:**

Given there were only a few minutes to discuss the Let's Recycle presentation at the end of the 4/24/24 ESC meeting, the group is waiting for feedback at the 5/22/24 ESC meeting before moving forward with any aspect of Let's Recycle.

In the event the Commissioners or City liaisons do not embrace the Let's Recycle strategy, the group discussed other options that could be presented at the next or future ESC meetings:

- Scale back Let's Recycle concept and start with 1 or 2 categories of items to reduce from the waste stream, possibly tying in with Bisbee's established "Hub" for recycling/baling.
- Suggest to Public Works that the roll-off bins, formerly located in the parking lot for glass drop-off, be made available again for recycling. Bisbee's recent grant to acquire a glass crusher for making construction materials opens a new opportunity for a partnership. Glass is heavy/bulky so redirecting it from the landfill for local repurposing is an environmental win. This could serve as a pilot program to gauge SV resident's willingness to use a drop-off center.
- Partner with local businesses to recycle corrugated cardboard. Many local businesses already have balers to recycle cardboard they generate. Since cardboard has value, businesses may have an incentive to co-locate cardboard drop-off points for the public.

Other ideas that were mentioned briefly included:

- Tabling Let's Recycle concept until after the 2024 election and work with new City Council members
- Forming a non-profit to work on Let's Recycle without Commission, Work Group or City involvement

**Wrap-up/Set Next Meeting Date:** Joelle will send out possible dates for the June Work Group meeting, sometime in the first half of the month being preferred. (Later arranged for June 6<sup>th</sup>)