

**Sierra Vista Environmental Stewardship Commission (ESC)
Minutes of Recycling Work Group Meeting
Wednesday, July 16, 2024 (3:30-5:02pm)
Sierra Vista Library Small Conference Room**

Attendees: Joelle Buffa, ESC Commissioner and Recycling Work Group Coordinator
Councilman Mark Rodriguez
David Jones, ESC Commissioner
Tom Runyon (interested community member)
Karen LeMay (non-voting ESC member and Work Group Secretary)

Introduction / Icebreaker:

Each attendee introduced themselves and shared a recent positive story about recycling. Responses were:

- a sign in Best Buy saying they no longer give out plastic bags for purchases.
- a recycling collection box placed in a classroom and building for aluminum cans.
- a glass recycling company started by college students in New Orleans for wetlands restoration.
- GearFix – a company that fixes broken outdoor gear and then re-sells the used items.

Next Recycle Article Topic:

At previous ESC meetings, discussions were held about ESC members writing short public outreach articles on recycling or other environmental topics. Two articles have been written and published by the City (one on introducing the ESC commission to the community and the other on cardboard recycling).

The work group discussed options of where monthly recycling articles could be published by the City. Councilman Rodriguez thought the best platform would be the City's Engage website, which Public Affairs runs. He said the City wants to utilize this website more, and the ESC could possibly have an ongoing column.

The name "Recycle Bits" was mentioned, and the work group was enthusiastic about using this name for a column on short recycling tips.

Each attendee (other than Councilman Rodriguez) agreed they will start writing short articles. Karen will write an article on the City's updated What and Where to Recycle webpage (working with ESC non-voting member Betty Poynter who researched and verified the updates). Tom said he would write an article on trends in recycling. Joelle will write an article on green waste. David agreed he would work on an article.

Debrief June City Council Presentation:

Karen rewatched Joelle's presentation to the City Council online and commended Joelle for her effective presentation. The presentation requested guidance and approval for publishing a resident survey to determine interest in recycling, reinstating glass recycling, promoting a competition for art made from recycled materials, and/or partnering with other entities to expand community recycling efforts.

Councilman Rodriguez watched the live presentation on Microsoft Teams but could not respond. He said he is in favor of a survey to gauge resident interest (his vote made 6 of 7 council members in favor). The cost of transporting materials is the issue – no one is in favor of raising fees. He said the City still has an open dialog with Republic Services and other recycling vendors. He will talk to Bisbee about the possibility of partnering with their glass recycling efforts.

Councilman Rodriguez added that trash services operate under a self-sufficient “enterprise fund”. A few years ago, Gail Griffin changed the Arizona law for cities under 50,000 residents to allow private refuse companies to compete with City services. Several private companies came into Sierra Vista and undercut the City’s fees, and the City lost many customers. If other revenue sources could be identified, or if recycling services could be under a different budget line item, then recycling services could be performed by the City.

The group asked Councilman Rodriguez if the City currently has any MOU’s or other service agreements with Ft. Huachuca (which could be a recycling partner). He said several, one being for ambulance service and another for library book lending. There is a new Garrison Commander, so this option could be explored.

Engage Platform Resident Survey:

Before the meeting, Joelle researched ways to conduct a public survey and sample questions for determining community interest in recycling. The goals of the survey were identified: Gauge resident/business attitudes on recycling; learn if, what and where residents currently recycle; what are barriers to recycling; and determine respondents willingness to participate in a drop-off center. Joelle had drafted 21 questions for the work group to review and discuss. A few changes were made, and group members have until Friday July 19th to submit additional changes to Karen. The final list will be presented at the July 24th ESC meeting for submission to the City to advertise and publish the survey.

One idea expressed for future thought was to find ways to incentivize recycling, either through lowering trash fees or a credit on other City services.

Next Steps / Future Projects:

1. **Art in the Park booth** to highlight recycling and possibly hold a contest for the best artwork made with recycled materials. Councilman Rodriguez thought this was a good idea and suggested we get a booth near other City booths (with possibly no booth fee), and to be sure the booth was identified on the festival map. Suggestions were made to have booth visitors fill out the recycling survey, with the QR code to the City’s webpage, and give a raffle ticket for prizes (the City gets prizes donated for such purposes). Another suggestion was to have recycled art work from a student art competition show-cased at the booth. The Waterwise Program conducts a poster contest for schools, with prizes awarded by the mayor, and this could be used as a model. We’d have to organize a contest soon- at the start of the school year. We’ll ask for a volunteer lead at the July 24th ESC meeting. Work group members said if they were in town, they would take a shift to sit at the booth. Karen offered to contact the Art in Park organizers and look into getting a booth.

2. **Recycling and other environmental projects on PDS Golf Course.** Councilman Rodriguez said once the City took control of PDSCC, there would be many changes to the management decisions of Castle & Cooke, including water use (the City will use “smart” irrigation systems, as currently done at Veterans Park). We discussed that currently the golf course maintenance person responsible for emptying trash cans on the course estimated he disposes of 30-50 aluminum cans per day as he is not allowed by his employer to separate the cans from trash. Councilman Rodriguez agreed adding blue bins for recycling aluminum cans would be a good idea, as well as forming a resident advisory board once the purchase is complete.

Summary / Set Next Meeting Date:

- Members will begin writing recycling articles for publication on a City platform.
- The survey questions will be finalized and presented at the next ESC meeting on July 24th.
- Next Recycle Work Group meeting is Wednesday, August 21st at 3:30pm Library small conference room