

Macalester-Groveland Community Council Environment Committee

March 16, 2017

Members in attendance: Johanna Anderson, Craig Skone, David Soll, Wendell Berry, Michelle Berg, Britta Sherill (staff)

Guests: Dan Niziolek (City of Saint Paul), Nancy Hylden (Hylden Advocacy & Law), Kat Groschens and Susan Hubbard (Eureka Recycling)

Meeting called to order at 7:03, February minutes approved.

LED Streetlights

Jean Hanson attended the Environment Committee meeting to discuss her concerns about the City of Saint Paul transitioning to the use of LED streetlights. Jean explained that she has a medical condition that causes her to be extremely sensitive to certain types of light. Currently, the City is testing LED streetlights in Union Park. Jean is concerned that the City will begin using LED streetlights city-wide if the pilot test in Union Park goes well.

Committee members agreed to look into the current City process with respect to streetlights and the current pilot in Union Park.

City of Saint Paul Sustainable To-Go Packaging

Dan from the Department of Safety and Inspections provided the committee with an overview of the efforts the City of Saint Paul has taken over the last 18 months. The City formed a workgroup that included a variety of stakeholders that would be impacted by the to-go packaging ordinance. When DSI began doing research for the proposed ordinance, they found an existing ordinance from 1989. They used the existing ordinance as a starting point.

Summary of process and ordinance details

- The ordinance is focused on establishments serving food for immediate consumption.
- Tying ordinance requirements to the City's residential recycling contract.
- City staff is having conversations with other cities in the region that have implemented similar programs (Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Bloomington).
- Hosted four workgroup meetings.
- Currently drafting the final ordinance language, intend to bring it to the Council in April or May, host a public meeting in late May/early June.
- Hospitals and nursing homes are exempt.

Questions from the committee

- Will fitness centers that offer coffee in foam cups be required to comply? – Dan will look into this.

- How will businesses be advised on when to use recyclable or compostable products? – This decision will be left up to individual businesses, but the requirements will be based on the City’s current residential recycling contract. Businesses are also required to offer the collection service for whatever type of products they provide. Ramsey County also offers a great business recycling assistance program.
- What is the timing for the ordinance implementation? – The earliest the ordinance would be passed would be in July. The ordinance would not take effect until 1 year after it passes.
- How will enforcement work? – The focus is on writing a strong ordinance with clear definitions. The initial focus will be on implementation and then compliance.
- Could there be a mandatory review period to ensure the ordinance language stays relevant? – The ordinance will be reviewed annually.

This discussion also included guests representing Eureka Recycling and Dart Corporation.

Susan Hubbard, Eureka Recycling

- Eureka Recycling heavily promotes waste reduction and this ordinance raises the opportunity to encourage residents to bring their own containers.
- Currently, to-go containers are a huge barrier to achieving zero waste goals.
- Ramsey County’s Biz Recycling program: the grant program allows for an option to switch to reusables and/or implement recycling and organics collection; Salut saved \$1,000/month by adding organics collection and offering compostable items
- City Council needs to keep an eye on the exemption process.
- Eureka can help with the transition; businesses can purchase products through their co-op, Eureka can set up fairs for businesses to see and feel the products.

Nancy Hylden, representing Dart Corporation

- Dart makes all types of products
- Questions whether this ordinance would actually lead to environmental benefits
- The City should be cautious on imposing restrictions that lead to minimal benefits but that may harm small businesses
- Nancy walked through the list of statements Dart considers to be myths about polystyrene
 - Footprint of polystyrene is bad
 - Polystyrene is not recyclable
 - Small businesses can’t recycle foam
 - Foam is filling up landfills
 - Polystyrene is made from a dangerous chemical
- Dart can manufacture compostable products, but they source from overseas
- Question from committee member: How many foam recycling facilities exist in Twin Cities and do they accept food packaging? – Nancy will look into this

Capitol Region Watershed District Grant Planning

- Workshop scheduled for April 28th

- Communications will start in late March
- Can still solicit donations
- Final planning at April meeting