

## AGENDA REPORT

**DATE:** July 27, 2010  
**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Environmental Commission  
**SUBJECT:** RE-USABLE BAG PROGRAM AT LOCAL GROCERY STORES

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Authorize Environmental Commission to work with the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce and seven local grocery stores to promote re-usable bags.

### **BACKGROUND**

The topic of re-usable bags was considered by the City Council on January 13, 2009 and sent to the Environmental Commission as part of their 2009-2010 Work Plan. On May 26, 2009 the Environmental Commission submitted a request to Council proposing an education and outreach campaign to reduce single-use bags. After discussion, Council asked the Environmental Commission to further consider the re-usable bag campaign with respect to other environmental priorities and budget limitations.

On May 10 and June 14, 2010 the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) presented a report to the Environmental Commission and offered to work with the Commission to implement a voluntary Re-usable Bag Program focused on reminding people to bring their re-usable bags into local grocery stores. All materials for the Re-usable Bag Program are provided at no cost to the Chamber.

### **DISCUSSION**

To address the issue of customers forgetting their re-usable bags, the "Keep California Beautiful" organization created the "Got Your Bags?" Program. This voluntary program encourages all shoppers to use re-usable bags instead of single-use bags in an effort to reduce waste in landfills. The "Got Your Bags?" Program has been implemented in San Jose, San Diego, Sacramento, and Los Angeles.

After the "Got Your Bags?" report and discussion from the Chamber, the Environmental Commission unanimously approved reporting on this program to City Council and is requesting approval to work with the Chamber to inform local grocery markets and encourage them to voluntarily use the free materials. This Re-usable Bag Program aligns with a 2009-2010 Environmental Commission Work Plan goal to:

“Implement approved education and outreach programs to achieve national resource conservation for Los Altos.”

With Council approval, a designated member of the Environmental Commission and the Chamber will contact management at seven local grocery stores (Andronico’s Market, DeMartini Orchard, Draeger’s Supermarket, Lucky Supermarket, Safeway, Trader Joe’s, and Whole Foods Market), to introduce them to the “Got Your Bags?” Program and request their voluntary participation in the following program elements:

- Post “Got Your Bags?” signs on entry doors: These are 5 x 5 “window clings” with no branding; just the words “Got Your Bags?” and a simple graphic of a bag.
- Distribute “Got Your Bags?” buttons for baggers to wear: These are small buttons, 2-3 inches in size, with no branding; just the words “Got Your Bags?” and a simple graphic of a bag.
- Distribute “Bagger Tips” educational sheets: This would include guidance to (A) ask the customer if they have their own bags before using disposable ones, (B) wear the “Got Your Bags?” buttons, and (C) minimize number of bags used while not compromising consumer safety or convenience.
- Distribute “Got Your Bags?” decals for cars: These are 2-inch square window clings with simple graphics of a bag that “magnetically” adhere to a car window without any type of glue. Volunteers and the Chamber would distribute these materials in Los Altos, either at the Farmers Market or in the parking lots of the stores.

The Los Altos Village Association Board of Directors unanimously endorsed the “Got Your Bags?” Program on June 16, 2010.

City Attorney Jolie Houston has reviewed the report.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact. All materials are provided free of charge from the “Keep California Beautiful” organization. Volunteers from the Environmental Commission and the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce will accomplish administration and distribution.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Council could agree to some or none of the proposed elements. Council could direct Environmental Commission to other activities related to re-usable bags.



Summer 2010

# City News

City of Los Altos Newsletter



## Residential Weekly Curbside Cart Collection System

### New Garbage and Recycling Services for the City of Los Altos

Beginning September 2010, the City of Los Altos will be welcoming a new garbage and recycling collection company – Mission Trail Waste Systems (MTWS). The City Council selected MTWS through a comprehensive competitive bidding process earlier this year. MTWS offered the community solid waste services that have been significantly expanded over current service levels with little or no changes to overall rates.

#### Schedule of New Services

New recycling, organics and garbage collection will be phased in over the month of September. Collection for weekly recycling will begin in September. Weekly collection of organics is set to start September 15th, and garbage collection in new carts - curbside, will begin on October 1. New cart delivery for recycling, organics and garbage will take place one week prior to the beginning of each service date. Some deliveries will take place as early as the end of August. Multi-family and commercial collection services begin October 1st.

#### Community Information Meeting on Aug. 9, 2010 from 7-9 pm

The Environmental Commission will host a special presentation by Mission Trail Waste Systems (MTWS) for residential users from 7-8 pm and business and commercial users from 8-9 pm. Each presentation will be followed by a Questions and Answers session. The special presentations will focus on the new garbage collection and recycling services and transition plans. The meeting will be held at the Civic Center in the Hillview Multipurpose Room. For additional information call 650-947-2607.

#### Billing Schedule

The last bill from the current service provider, Recology, will include the months of July and August. Normally, residential billing covers a three-month period and is sent out quarterly. MTWS will bill for the month of September at current rates. Residents will enjoy a full month of weekly recycling in September with no additional charge. Quarterly billing will resume for the months of October, November and December through MTWS and will incorporate applicable rate changes. Commercial billing will continue on a monthly basis starting with the month of September by MTWS at current rates. Changes in rates for commercial accounts are effective for the month of October.

#### Billing Rates

Thirty-two gallon garbage can residential customers who bring their containers to the edge of the street will experience no change in the current monthly rate of \$28.11. However, there will be an extra charge for those requesting backyard service. Those who do select backyard service will also have their recyclable and organics cart serviced. Exception: handicapped individuals  
(See page 2 New Garbage Service)

(New Garbage Service from page 1)

will not be charged extra for backyard service.

A new 20-gallon garbage can option will now be offered at a lower rate. Rates for all the various service options are posted at the MTWS website [www.missiontrail.com](http://www.missiontrail.com).

### New Collection Containers

Single-family residences will receive a new blue cart for recycling, a green cart for organics (food scraps and yard waste), and a gray cart for garbage. The old containers will be removed and reused or recycled. You will also receive a pail for kitchen scraps with your green cart. If you live in a multi-family complex, you will receive a tote bag for recyclables.

### Expanded Services

All services will be collected weekly and offered in a wide range of residential cart sizes – 20 (garbage only), 32, 64 and 96 gallon. Organics collection includes a full range of materials, including food waste, plant trimmings, produce, food-soiled paper and animal proteins. Curbside collection of non-toxic Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) includes dry cell batteries, cell phones, used motor oil and filters, cooking oil, water-based paint and compact fluorescent light bulbs. For a fee, on-call collection of toxic HHW (pesticides, oil-based paints, electronic-waste) can be collected at your doorstep with a 48-hour notice.

### Alternative Fuel Vehicles

MTWS fleet will include the use of a full new fleet of Compressed Natural Gas-powered collection vehicles that are quieter and produce fewer emissions than diesel-powered vehicles.

### New Website

MTWS Los Altos has launched its website. Visit their website at [www.missiontrail.com](http://www.missiontrail.com) for more information regarding the service transition and program changes. Look for more information in your mailbox in August.



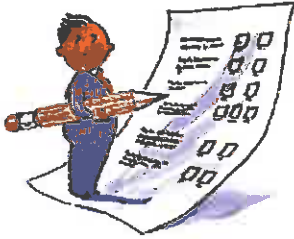
*Reduce*



*Reuse*



*Recycle*



## MAKE ETHICS PART OF YOUR CANDIDATE CHOICE CRITERIA

Los Altos residents know how they want their candidates to behave – honestly, fairly, focused on the issues, and accountable for their actions.

Ethical candidates fight hard, and they fight fair. They check their facts and they don't spread rumors or provide half truths. They don't misrepresent themselves or their opponents. If they benefit from the unethical conduct of an independent group, they repudiate that support and take action to show they mean it.

There are basic principles of decency, honesty, and fair play which every candidate for public office has a moral obligation to uphold. Candidates are urged to aspire to the City's Voluntary Code of Ethics in order that after a vigorously contested, but fairly conducted campaign, our citizens may exercise their constitutional right to a free and untrammelled choice and the will of the people may be fully and clearly expressed on all the issues.

Honest candidates follow the letter and the spirit of the law. They do not make promises to supporters that will compromise their ability to represent the best interest of both the public and the entire community.

### VOTER CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING THE CANDIDATES

*As best as you can tell, have the candidates you are favoring...*

- ✓ Told the truth about themselves?
- ✓ Focused on issues relevant for Los Altos?
- ✓ Told truths about opponents that are important for voters to know?
- ✓ Pointed out differences between themselves and opponents that are relevant to the political office?
- ✓ Treated opponents with dignity and respect?
- ✓ Fought fairly and avoided demeaning or irrelevant personal attacks?
- ✓ Never tried to confuse or mislead voters?
- ✓ Clearly identified who supported any candidate-controlled committee?
- ✓ Taken responsibility for any mistakes they made or mistakes made by their volunteers?
- ✓ Aspired to the City's Voluntary Code of Ethics?

Read more about the candidates on the League of Women Voters website [www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org), on the candidates' campaign websites, and from their ballot statements (if they have chosen to submit one – candidates must pay a fee for this) published by the Registrar of Voters in your sample

ballot, and on the City's website. These statements are created by the candidate, not an objective third party.

Information about the laws for proper campaigning is available from the City Clerk's office at 650-947-2611 or the California Fair Political Practices Commission at its website [www.fppc.ca.gov](http://www.fppc.ca.gov) or by calling 1-800-ASK-FPPC.

Ethics in government begins at the ballot box! Make freedom count and vote on November 2, 2010.

# VOTE!

### Babies Sleeping at City Hall

Shhhh! Babies are sleeping outside City Hall. Those little Oregon or Dark-Eyed Junkos you see flitting round the shrubbery at City Hall have decided to make it their home. Babies can be heard chirping in their camouflaged nest by some potted plants. The parents squawk and flutter about if a human gets too near. For more information, please go to <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Dark-eyedJunco/id>

## Storm Drains

### No Dumping Flows to Bay

The City of Los Altos is requesting your help in maintaining the City of Los Altos' storm drain system.

The City's storm drains are designed to handle normal rainwater flows, but debris and hazardous substances that are allowed to be washed down by this rainfall pollute our creeks and the bay. This can also clog the underground storm drain pipes, not allowing them to function correctly and increasing flood problems.

**How can I help?** – You can prevent debris from entering the City's system. During the fall and summer months, people tend to pile or sweep yard waste such as grass and leaves into the storm drain. Simply place the yard waste into your yard waste bin for pick up. Also, exercise care when applying fertilizers or washing your car since excess runoff goes down the storm drain into local creeks and into the bay. Do not dump any hazardous substance into any storm drain inlets.

Another way to help is to properly dispose of old swimming pool water. This water contains chemicals that should not go into the storm drains which flow to our local creeks and eventually end up in San Francisco Bay. Swimming pool water should be disposed of into your sanitary sewer clean-out pipe. For more information or questions, please contact the City of Los Altos at 650-947-2780.

## Disposing of Fat, Oil and Grease

Ever wonder what to do with the fat, oil or grease that remains in your frying pan?

Disposing of fat, oil and grease can be damaging if not done correctly. Pouring these items down the drains in your home can cause blockages in the City of Los Altos' underground sewer system. This can be costly since the buildup can block an entire sewer pipe potentially causing an unhealthy sewer overflow into your home. Additionally, if the overflow reaches the City's storm drain system before our maintenance crew can respond, it can also cause sanitary waste to reach our creeks and bay negatively affecting the environment.

When disposing of fat, oil and grease, do not pour them into the drain or garbage disposal. Let them cool, pour into a container and dispose in the garbage can or landfill. Using a paper towel to absorb the grease and putting it in the regular trash is another method of disposal. We want to do our part to help maintain the sewer system and protect the environment.

For more information or questions, please contact the City of Los Altos at 650-947-2780.



## Pedestrian Countdown and Audible System Comes to Los Altos

A new pedestrian countdown system to indicate how many second you have left to cross the street is being installed throughout the signalized intersections in the City of Los Altos. This system includes larger push buttons and audible pedestrian signals for the vision-impaired.



## City meetings

	Date	Time	Location
City Council (with exceptions)	2nd & 4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m.	City Hall
Environmental Commission	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m.	City Hall
Historical Commission	4th Monday	7:00 p.m.	City Hall
Library Commission	1st Tuesday	5:30 p.m.	Library
Parks, Arts & Rec Commission	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	City Hall
Planning Commission	1st & 3rd Thursday	7:30 p.m.	City Hall
Traffic Commission	4th Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	City Hall
Youth Commission	1st Monday	7:00 p.m.	City Hall (usually)

### **Step right up—express yourself**

You may fill out this Civic Soapbox online by going to the City's web page [www.losaltosca.gov](http://www.losaltosca.gov) and clicking on City News Soap Box. You may also print a copy of the soapbox, fill it out with your comments and mail it to City News Editor Phyllis Semple, 1 N. San Antonio Road, Los Altos CA 94022

## Civic Soapbox

Comments:

Name

Address

Telephone number

Do you want a reply?

**Please call VEGA  
(Volunteers Enriching  
Government Action)  
650/947-2608 for  
available volunteer jobs.**

*Statement of Purpose  
To communicate Los Altos City  
services, programs and activities of concern  
and interest to and involving residents and  
businesses within the City of Los Altos. To  
provide greater awareness of opportunities  
and encourage further civic participation.*

The City News is published three times a year.

City Council:

- David C. Casas, Mayor*
- Ronald D. Packard, Mayor Pro Tem*
- Lou Becker*
- Val Carpenter*
- Megan Satterlee*

City Manager: *Doug Schmitz*

Editor: *Phyllis Semple 650/947-2608*

City News

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