



City of Calistoga Green Committee Agenda Item Summary

DATE July 12, 2013

AGENDA ITEM 5.A. – Disposable Plastic Bags

Per the direction of the Committee, staff has drafted the following items that could be used to seek voluntary phase-out of disposable plastic bags:

- Letter to business owners
- Tips for encouraging reusable bags usage
- Information sheet for customers

CITY OF CALISTOGA GREEN COMMITTEE

Karen Chang, Chair • Janice Stenger, Vice-Chair • Heidi Tice, Committee Member



_____, 2013

TO: Calistoga Business Owners

FROM: Calistoga Green Committee

We need your help in reducing plastic bag usage!

Do you know the following facts about plastic bag use in Napa County?

- **Approximately 51 million plastic bags are discarded in Napa County every year.**
- **Less than 5% of plastic bags are recycled.**
- **Plastic bags are used for an average of only 12 minutes.**

Plastic bags get blown around and caught in trees, bushes, and fences, creating a significant eyesore. They also end up in storm drains, where they can cause flooding. Bags can harm plants that ensnare them, as well as animals that become tangled in them or mistake them for food or nesting material. When they enter the Napa River, San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean, they break down into tiny toxic particles that degrade water and soil. Plastic pieces eaten by fish are then eaten by us.

The City of Calistoga Green Committee has concluded that as long as plastic bags are easily available, there will be little change in shopper habits. (A community-wide education program by Napa CanDo showed that shoppers will not easily switch to reusable bags.) We believe that the only way to create real change is to phase out disposable plastic carry-out bags.

There are now at least 76 cities and counties in California and even more throughout the nation that have banned disposable plastic carry-out bags and require a charge for paper bags. In order to help the City of Calistoga avoid the expense of adopting and enforcing such an ordinance, we are seeking your help in voluntarily discontinuing the use of disposable plastic carry-out bags.

We know paper bags cost more than plastic bags. Enclosed are some tips on encouraging customers to use reusable bags - the most sustainable alternative - along with a handout to give customers.

We will be checking in a few months to see the progress you have made in minimizing plastic bag use and helping us achieve a cleaner and healthier community!

For further information about this request, please contact _____.

How to Encourage Reusable Bags Usage

- Discontinue providing carry-out plastic bags
- Store paper bags away at the checkout stand and only use upon customer request
- Display reusable bag reminders at store entrances
- Ask each customer if they brought their reusable bags before bagging
- Sell reusable bags near the checkout stand and other locations
- Encourage customers to purchase reusable bags
- Give a free reusable bag to customers who spend a specified amount at the store
- If you give a reusable bag credit, announce to customers how much they saved by using reusable bags



Paper or plastic? Neither! Choose to REUSE!

Plastic bags harm the environment, are wasteful and expensive

Carry REUSABLE bags & make things better!

- **Every year in Napa County we throw away 51 million plastic bags - all made from fossil fuels.**

They eat up valuable resources and are used an average of only 12 minutes.

- **Plastic bags are tough to recycle.**

Bags create litter and get jammed in the recycling equipment, so most of them end up in landfills.

- **They pollute our environment and endanger wildlife.**

Plastic bags entangle birds, fish and other marine wildlife. They break down into tiny toxic bits that are ingested by wildlife, contaminating the food chain.