

## **Foam-Free Seattle Meeting Minutes**

January 22, 2007

### 1. Introductions

Present: Heather, Sarah, Ellie, Christina, Suellen, Sudha, Aura, Jimmy, Erik, Victoria, Casey, Kelsey, Dan

Attendees have affiliations with Bastyr College of Naturopathic Medicine, Shoreline Community College, People for Puget Sound and Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation.

### 2. Participant Commitment

Heather is overseeing the listserv and the current Foam-Free Seattle web page on the People For Puget Sound website. On that site we list four levels of participation, and we ask people to let us know which level of interest they have. We will wait until our white sheet and sign-on letters are completed before doing more active recruitment with the community and businesses.

### 3. Local Businesses That Don't Use Polystyrene

It was agreed that before we ask any more businesses their permission to be listed on our soon-to-be-created website as non-polystyrene using businesses, that we complete our sign-on letter for businesses so that we are clear on exactly what we are asking, and they are clear on what we are doing.

Ellie gave an update on businesses she contacted that do not use polystyrene and who gave consent to be listed on our site: Essential Baking, Ivar's, Silent Heart Nest, Madison Market and Café Flora. Businesses that don't use polystyrene from whom we have not yet received permission for web listing are: Starbucks, Taco Time, Taco Bell, Nordstrom, Whole Foods, Metropolitan Market, Portage Bay Café and Dick's.

### 4. Strategy Discussion

This agenda item was combined with agenda item #8, which included alternatives to polystyrene, how to best make our case to the city, and the time line for setting our first meeting with the Mayor's staff. It was agreed that we need to collect more research on the environmental and health hazards of polystyrene, as well as the processes of other citizen advocacy groups in getting bans adopted in their cities and counties.

Research into the environmental effects of polystyrene use could include, among other things, looking at the environmental impacts of production, decomposition, off gassing during incineration, and litter. There is a good deal of writing and research on this available on the internet. Jimmy volunteered to look into health effects of polystyrene. He may be able to find others at Bastyr to work with him on the research of health effects.

We need to research viable alternatives, as there are many considerations that are not readily apparent. For example, in using corn-based alternatives, are we also weighing the problem of agro-business mono-crops and the pollution created in modern farming methods, and the fact that the corn-based products may not actually biodegrade quickly except under very specific and not often presenting circumstances. How would paper be better, and what are its problems? What about other materials, such as sugar cane and bamboo products, for example? Eric offered to look into alternatives There was a PCC article on plastics alternatives, including corn-based products in the August issue of Sound Consumer that raised just these questions.

Heather said that the cost of polystyrene alternatives has dropped, so its cost is not as much an obstacle as it used to be, but when she was working on the first polystyrene ban in Santa Monica, the issue of the Mom and Pop operations came up, as the impacts on smaller businesses of a ban could be seen as an unfair economic burden. A ban affecting all businesses equally might level the playing field, however.

We discussed the range of how strong the ban should be for Seattle.

Sarah presented her comparative spreadsheet on the extent, enforcement and date of the adoption of bans in other cities and counties. This information will be useful in making our case for the ban to the city. It was suggested that maybe the fact that Portland put the ban into place years ago will create a spirit of healthy competition in which Seattle will not want to be outdone by her sister city to the south! Sarah said that the city of Malibu has a good two page white paper, which is a summary of why there is a need to institute such a ban. We can refer to Malibu's work in the creation of our own white sheet. We will also create a fact sheet that will outline our effort, why we want to see a ban adopted, and offer viable alternatives to polystyrene.

We want to speak with organizations and city staff in other cities to learn about resources, research, and mechanisms of developing their ordinances.

We want to find out if a template for doing this polystyrene ban advocacy exists, and if not, it would be good to create one for other cities to use so that this research does not have to be duplicated over and over again. We can put links to research and related articles on our website, which could be a beginning for the collection of "template" materials.

Heather pointed out that we should find out what the large national food chains such as McDonald's and Jamba Juice use for Styrofoam alternatives in cities with the ban.

Heather, Sudha and Sarah will work on drafting a sign-on letter that we can use enlisting the endorsement of businesses and organizations. Sudha said that a large coalition of public health and environmental groups would be very helpful in showing citywide community support for the ban. Suellen suggested we look at the website of Californians

Against Waste ([www.cawrecycles.org](http://www.cawrecycles.org)) for more information on what other cities have accomplished with their polystyrene bans.

Heather suggested that if we want to see this implemented in 2007, that we set the first meeting with the city in one month, because in October and November the city will be basically closed down as they deal with the budget. If we are to have our first city meeting in four weeks, then our group needs to meet again in at least three weeks with all tasks completed so that reports can be made to the group at our next meeting (see task assignments - agenda item #6). With this information, we can be well prepared for the meeting with the Mayor's staff. Ellie will make the appointment.

#### 5. Review of website, listserv and other communications tools.

We currently only have a page on the People For Puget Sound site, but we need our own site. Sarah set up a temporary blog site through Blogspot, but we need one more easily accessed and referenced. Jimmy has some experience setting up websites, and he offered to help with this. Sarah said she is experienced with design, and the two will work together.

#### 6. Task Assignments

- Sign-on letter – Sudha, Heather, Sarah  
Letter of ban endorsement to Mayor and staff from individuals and organizations  
Letter of ban endorsement to Mayor and staff from businesses
  
- Research processes of other cities – Heather, Kristina, Aura  
Referral to research resources and information to support ban  
Business alternatives to polystyrene where bans are in effect  
What did they learn in their advocacy process that might be helpful to us?  
Is there any kind of “template” in existence for ban advocacy?
  
- Website creation and development – Sarah and Jimmy
  
- Research on Environmental issues – Heather and Kristina  
Impacts of production  
Decomposition  
Off gassing during incineration  
Litter  
Impact on landfill  
Impact on marine life and ecology
  
- Research on Health issues – Jimmy  
Look at research on health hazards of eating food stored or heated in polystyrene?
  
- General fact sheet – Sarah  
Reasons we want a ban adopted

## Alternatives to Polystyrene

Bulleted points supporting health, environmental and financial impacts of using polystyrene.

What savings could a city expect if polystyrene use were discontinued?

- Minutes and follow-up on task assignments – Ellie
- 7. Expansion of outreach and public support

On hold until our next meeting

- 8. Other business and next agenda

People will e-mail Ellie with proposed agenda items for our next meeting. Her e-mail is [elro11@yahoo.com](mailto:elro11@yahoo.com) .

OUR NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26 @ 6PM.  
We will meet at the same place, the Capitol Hill Library at 425 E. Harvard (cross street Republican), Seattle, 98102