



Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
Government Affairs Committee Meeting
February 13, 2008
Community Hospital Properties
787 Munras Avenue, Suite C, Monterey

No items
require Board
action

“Support the Issues and People that Support the Monterey Peninsula Economy”

MINUTES

I. Call to Order – 3:45 pm.

Present: Rowley, Wyatt, Gustafson

Staff: McKenzie, Coleman

Guests: Amalia Chammoro (Regional Representative, California Restaurant Association), Sarah Graham, Carolyn Swanson, Angela Brantley (City of Monterey), Adam Joseph, reporter with Monterey County Weekly, and invited presenter Mike Levy, Director, Plastics Food Service Packaging Group of the American Chemistry Council

II. Consent Calendar

M/S/P: Approved January 9, 2008 meeting minutes

III. Board Actions on Prior GAC Motions – deferred.

IV. Reports from local government and legislative representatives – deferred.

V. Special action items: Presentation on proposed ban or phasing out of polystyrene food packing containers and bags.

Kristina Wyatt introduced Mike Levy, Director, Food Service Packaging Group, American Chemistry Council to make a presentation on behalf of the manufacturers of polystyrene food packing products. Wyatt explained a litter abatement task force was established to deal with litter problems but has concentrated on elimination of polystyrene products and is currently drafting and redrafting a model ordinance for presentation to cities. Levy explained he represents the trade association of manufacturers of food plastics and gave a little background on himself. Levy indicated his group understands the litter problem and wants to be part of a solution but believes realistic options to a product ban have not been given serious attention. Levy suggested there are recycling options that have not been explored and that existing litter laws are not enforced. Levy also stated that although specific product bans may be well intentioned they are frequently not effective at reducing litter because they results in trading one kind of litter for another. Levy suggested that if a ban of polystyrene products is not accompanied by other changes – better enforcement of litter laws, increased waste composting efforts – not much will be accomplished. Levy also informed the committee that while biodegradable products can be good, that doesn't work all that well with food packaging and that paperboard products, which is the choice of many to replace polystyrene products, is not as easily or quickly biodegradable as many people think. Levy also indicated polystyrene products have been recycled in some places (he cited Los Angeles, but mentioned that once subsidies stopped the recycling stopped).

Levy pointed out that polystyrene is widely used because it is cheap and, since it is 98% air, lightweight. Hospitals as well as food service establishments use polystyrene

products for those reasons. Levy stated that bans seem to present an easy solution to litter abatement but that is based mostly on misperceptions, that communities that have good litter abatement programs have done well reducing litter. Levy's group believes the real answer is effective litter abatement and they are willing to help. Levy pointed out litter comes from somewhere and effective litter abatement begins with getting to the heart of problem.

Levy also mentioned polystyrene products represent only one tenth of one percent of landfill volume nationwide. An irony is that states with strong recycling mandates don't give much credit for polystyrene products because they are so lightweight. According to Levy, the state solid waste management board is looking at compostable plastics as part of a solution.

During discussion, Brantley described the current Monterey effort as aiming at a gradual phasing out of polystyrene products rather than a ban but admitted when questioned the only distinction from an outright ban is timing.

Wyatt concluded the special presentation by asking if the Chamber and the business community would be willing to get involved with this issue and work toward more realistic solutions as opposed to outright bans.

VI. Current/carryover items - deferred.

VII. Standing Issues

Water: Rowley suggested the Government Affairs Committee should schedule a presentation on the regional water supply options developed by the working group convened by the Public Utilities Commission Division of Ratepayer Advocates.

VIII. Next Meeting – Wednesday, March 12, 2008 at 3:30 pm at Community Hospital Properties, 787 Munras in Monterey.

IX. Adjournment – 5:15 pm.

Prepared by Bob McKenzie