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Lamorinda in great shape to meet new recycling law

By Sora O'Doherty



Food waste disposal is the focus of new waste reduction law, SB 1383. Photo Bigstock

As Senate Bill 1383, the most significant waste reduction law in the past 30 years, comes into effect, Orinda, like the rest of Lamorinda, is well positioned to be in compliance. In a Feb. 1 presentation to the Orinda City Council, Senior Program Manager Judith Silver of Recycle Smart explained that Orinda is already ahead of the game, because residents have already been separating green waste from trash and recycling. One of the most significant elements of the bill, finding ways to get edible food to people who need it instead of to the landfill, is already being practiced to a significant degree in Lamorinda.

SB 1383 is intended to reduce short-lived climate pollutants in California, and sets goals to be reached by 2025. Food is 18% of what is discarded. Silver said that she is confident that Lamorinda is largely in compliance with this law, although there will be some changes. Up until now, multifamily buildings could opt out of food waste recycling and recycle only yard waste, but the

requirement now applies to everyone. New Administrative Services Director Doug Alessio helped with a grant application that will provide one-time funding for educational outreach to explain the new provisions.

Recycle Smart will begin conducting random "lid flips," checking for non-compliant materials in bins, along their 68 routes. This will include residential bins, but citations and fines for non-compliance will be limited to commercial bins. Businesses are divided into two tiers. In Orinda, there are only two Tier One businesses, Republic of Cake (because they sell product wholesale) and Safeway, which is already largely doing what is required. Tier Two includes the country club and schools, and they will be required to participate in food recovery. This work is already underway with White Pony Express, The Muffin People and the Recycle Smart Food Recovery Program. Through White Pony Express and The Muffin People, edible food is being collected in Lamorinda and elsewhere and distributed to different nonprofits in Oakland via a safe and consistent delivery system, according to Silver.

Additional requirements of the new law for businesses, including the city government, include assuring that paper purchases have recycled content. Orinda is participating, and will save about \$55,000, Silver said. She also said that there will not be fines for residents, only for businesses.

Council Member Inga Miller, who also serves on the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority along with Council Member Amy Worth, asked Silver where the money will come from for the new initiatives. Silver responded that through their rates they already have the infrastructure in place. Eighty percent of the new requirements are around food recovery, and they received a grant to help White Pony Express expand its services and a block grant in the last state budget of around \$250,000 for the next two years. After that, funding will be through rates.

Worth talked about how interested high school students are in the environment, including the reduction of methane gas. She noted that clean, unused food from restaurants is used by the East Bay Municipal Water District, which converts it to energy to power its filter plant and sewage treatment.

Council Member Darlene Gee inquired about the program under which residents can get compost from Republic Services. Silver confirmed that the program is still active and she would like to increase the program. Manager of Recycle Smart's composting program, Ashley Louisiana, confirmed after the meeting that there is an annual compost giveaway coordinated with Republic Services. There is a one-day event in the Lamorinda area (last year in Lafayette) and a one-day event in the Danville/Walnut Creek area. "I try to host the event in May each year for International Compost Awareness Week," Louisiana added.

In public comments, Charles Porges said that he has been composting his own yard waste for 40 to 50 years, and asked if there is a discount available for doing so. Silver replied that indeed, home composters are eligible for a discount, and the information is available on the Recycle Smart website. Jules Forgarty commented that "if food waste were a country, it would be the third largest emitter of greenhouse gasses after U.S. and China."

White Pony Express introduces new app to make food donation easier

White Pony Express has a new tool in its mission to end hunger in Contra Costa County: a new app. Restaurants and caterers can download the app and sign up to be a "food rescue hero." Once the food safety training has been completed, the restaurant or caterer can claim a food run via the app. No long-term commitment is needed. In as little as an hour, surplus food can be picked up for delivery to neighbors in need, according to the nonprofit: "Food rescue pickups can be set up on a regular schedule or just as a one-time event. Food rescue prevents healthy, fresh food from being wasted by delivering it to those who can use it."

White Pony Express was founded by Dr. Carol Weyland Conner in September 2013 on the simple idea that supermarkets had excess food that was being thrown out while people who couldn't afford food were going hungry. In addition to the app, restaurants and catering company can set up regular or one-time food

rescue pickups by contacting Pete Olsen at peterolsen@whiteponyexpress.org.
- S. O'Doherty

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[back](#)

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