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Trimble likes Bigbellies, 'and he cannot lie'

By Sora O'Doherty



Photos Sora O'Doherty

Director of Parks and Rec, Todd Trimble, waxed lyrical over the success of the Bigbelly trash and recycling receptacles in Orinda, as he presented a staff report on renewing the contract for the highly successful bins. The adoption of the Bigbelly Bins led to immediate improvements, Trimble said. Where previously recycling materials had been contaminated and unusable, suddenly they were uncontaminated and usable.

Trimble also spoke about issues that had occurred and been resolved during the first contract, such as making sure that the receptacles can be lifted by RecycleSmart trucks, as well as replacing the batteries that run the compacting feature. Trimble admitted that he's obsessed with the item called Collection Efficiency, which he looks at every day on his desktop computer, laptop or phone.

Prior to adopting Bigbelly receptacles, the city had a total of 126 public trash and recycling receptacles that needed to be emptied frequently. Only 34% of the locations offered recycling as well as trash collection. For example, there was no recycling service available at the Wilder sports complex, where, the staff report says, thousands of athletes and spectators visit each year.

Other drawbacks to the prior system were that there were no preventative measures against individuals and pests accessing waste material, resulting in rummaging and harvesting of the contents of the bins. Together with wind, this resulted in uncleanliness in the surrounding areas. Further, staff were forced to make contact with virtually every bin on a daily basis, in addition to having to expend time and resources to collect wind-blown and scattered trash.

The city first entered into a five-year agreement with Bigbelly in January 2018. Since then, Bigbelly's "CLEAN" software has allowed city staff and collection personnel to have complete transparency to monitor and track both short and long-term program success. Through 2021, the Smart Waste Operations resulted in over 200,000 gallons of waste and recycling being collected with 81% efficiency, a 44% recycling diversion rate, an 86% reduction in monthly collections, and a significant reduction in plastic bag use and cost.

In addition to the great success of the program, staff anticipates that payment for the next five-year service agreement can be covered by funding withdrawn from the Contra Costa County Solid Waste Authority (RecycleSmart) joint powers authority member reserve funds. And, as an added bonus, the bins are a place where Artify Orinda can display artworks by local artists.

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