



Zero Waste Commission

INFORMATION CALENDAR
_____, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Zero Waste Commission/Environment and Climate Commission

Submitted by: Steven Sherman, Chairperson, Zero Waste Commission AND
_____, Chairperson, Environment and Climate Commission

Subject: Recommendation: Provide City Financial Support for Purchase and
Installation of a Commercial Dishwasher at Berkeley High School

INTRODUCTION

The Zero Waste Commission (ZWC) advises City Council on solid waste policy and goals, including refuse, composting, and recycling services, budgets, and other decisions relating to solid waste. The Environment and Climate Commission (ECC) advises the City Council regarding environmental sustainability and climate change.

Berkeley High School (BHS) seeks to reduce solid waste by using reusable cutlery and dishes in its cafeteria. To this end, BHS has applied for a grant from StopWaste (the Alameda County Waste Management Authority) to cover initial costs of switching to reusables, including costs to outsource washing responsibilities to an off-site, third-party vendor. Additional funding is needed in order to carry out a permanent switch to reusables, with an in-house washing system.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The City supports solid waste reduction—the prevention of the need for off-site handling of discarded products, packaging, or materials—as a higher goal than recycling or composting. Fewer items to be collected for recycling, composting or landfilling translates into resource conservation, with benefits for the environment and the climate. BHS is developing a pilot program for reusable food containers, but needs additional funding to implement a sustainable, permanent program.

According to two students who recently presented their findings at a Zero Waste Commission meeting, the following quantitative information has been calculated or estimated:

- The cafeteria uses approximately 113,000 disposable plates and bowls every year, which creates over 6 tons of disposables landfilled annually.
- The cafeteria serves over 630 meals per day, to over 300 students.

- Eliminating disposable plates would save nearly \$1,000/year in landfill tipping fees.
- Greenhouse gas reduction associated with the use of reusable plates is estimated to exceed 3 tons in the first year (70% decrease) and more thereafter.

Off-site processing of reusables by a third-party vendor is fine for a temporary pilot program. A permanent program, however, warrants in-house washing capacity. The preliminary estimated cost of a commercial dishwasher is \$ _____. No cost estimates have been made, as yet, for its installation.

BACKGROUND

Sophie Horvath and Joshua Swift-Rawal, two Berkeley High juniors, have been working on this project since August 2023. The current plan is to implement recycled HDPE containers in the Berkeley High Cafeteria for one day a week use during the lunchtime schedule. This would begin in the 2024-2025 school year, provided that the StopWaste grant is awarded to cover the costs, since Berkeley High and BUSD have no funding available for this project. The next part of the plan would be to advocate for buying an industrial dishwasher for Berkeley High to meet their washing needs. This would allow BHS to transition to full-time, 5 day/week implementation of lunchtime reusables, significantly decreasing annual greenhouse gas emissions and landfill tipping fees.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Potential to reduce the use of single-use items while providing experiential learning and modeling of greater environmental sustainability in Berkeley High School's cafeteria.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

Report to Council from BHS students and staff regarding program implementation details, timelines, and results.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

ADD

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AND

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