

Draft Litter Task Force Meeting Notes
Fester Conference Room 3-4 PM
May 17, 2006

Participants: G. Gerritt, J. Lewis, B. Schiller, R. Summer-Mack and T. Getz

2. Legislative update

Tom Getz indicated there was not a lot of activity on litter issues in the General Assembly. Greg Gerritt also indicated the hearings he attended on smoking on beaches and plastic bag legislation did not get a lot of movement.

Mr. Robert Summer-Mack introduced a proposal for litter legislation entitled An Act Relating to the Use of Paper and Plastic Bags in Rhode Island. The gist of the legislation would require retailers to charge consumers three times the wholesale bag price. The retailers will be required to report to the RI Division of Taxation yearly on the total number of bags used. The retailers would be reimbursed for the cost of the bag with the additional funds collected to be set-aside in a separate account of the Division of Taxation. The funds would cover the cost of the existing bags recycling program and would create a public education program run by the RI Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) to encourage public use of non-disposable bags.

According to Mr. Summer-Mack the existing plastic bag recycling effort is only collecting ½ of 1% of all bags used in a year. He calculated this statistic from information supplied by the RIRRC. It was felt that this number may be low and the percentage could pick up as more people become familiar with the program. Nevertheless the collection efficiency would have to increase significantly before litter was reduced with the existing program. The bill would encourage the use of non-disposable bags and would also support the existing plastic bag program. Mr. Summer-Mack indicated he would work to find a sponsor for the bill for the next legislative session.

3. Future of the Litter Task Force

Tom Getz started this session of the meeting with a brief history of the Task Force. He said the Task Force was an outgrowth of a May 7, 2003 Environmental Roundtable meeting. The agreement at that time was DEM would host the meetings, provide website support, but the Task Force was to be lead by the environmental community. The group functioned for about a year in this mode. There were no meetings from the summer of 2004 to February 2005. The meetings started up again in March 2005, but the Task Force did not have a leader.

At this point Tom indicated his involvement with this group would be limited to attendance at the today's meeting. He said he had a new assignment within the agency and would not be able to serve as the focus point of the group. Tom indicated, if the group chose to stay together, DEM would maintain the Task Force website and would allow the group the meet in DEM headquarters.

No one who was attending the meeting volunteered to take up the leadership position, but they would work to see if there was any interest with either the RIRRC or Earth Day RI in taking over the role. Greg Gerritt agree to start an e-mail list serve on existing membership and would help Barry Schiller in arranging meetings of the two potential groups to determine their interest in a leadership position of the Task Force. The meeting was adjourned.