

## **Advisory Committee on the Environment**

### **Special Event Policy Changes (2014)**

Mike Bloxam, Industrial/Commercial/Institutional representative

In 2007, the City of London launched the initiative entitled "Greening of the Festivals". Brought forward with help from Waste-Free World and Thames Region Ecological Association (TREA), the initiative aimed to reduce waste by diverting recyclable and compostable materials from the garbage stream, and it came in endorsed by organizers of some of the largest waste producers such as Sunfest, Home County Folk Festival, and RibFest.

Greening the festivals encourages attendees to bring their own dishes and drink containers or use the on-site reusable dishes, while also keeping in mind the three streams of waste disposal: recycling, composting, and garbage. The EcoStations provide volunteer hours, allowing citizens (particularly high-school students) to help out by instructing festival attendees how to properly dispose of their waste. These volunteers keep down the cost of running the EcoStations.

On the evening of Tuesday, October 22, 2013, the Special Events Public Consultation Meeting took place at the Civic Garden Complex. Staff from the Community Services Department explained the policies and procedures that will change in the 2013 manual for the 2014 season. Upon describing changes to "Section 9: Procedures for the use of Victoria Park", staff reported the proposal that EcoStations will henceforth only have two streams required – garbage and recycling. Unless the event organizer requests the third stream (composting), the City of London will only provide EcoStations with two types of containers for garbage and recycling, and event organizers no longer need to provide staffing. The standard garbage cans already situated in the park will have blue bins twinned during the festival, with emptying of both a duty of the City. Emptying the (two or three) bins at the EcoStations remain the responsibility of the event organizer.

Staff explained that the original idea of having the EcoStations—with three streams and volunteers—came with anticipation of a green-bin program forthcoming by the City. Volunteers in the EcoStations instruct festival-goers how to dispose of waste properly into three streams so that residents can repeat the same process at home: garbage can, blue box, and green bin. London citizens become more aware of the three-stream process and don't have to think as much about it when bringing in the green-bin program.

Now with no green-bin program on the horizon (the pilot project in Pond Mills concluded nearly a year ago and there are no plans to implement a city-wide program currently), the staff conclusion aligns with not implementing green bins rather than continuing to make a progressive step toward waste diversion at these festivals. The policy will continue to require one EcoStation for every four food vendors. The City provides everything included in the EcoStations, while the event operator used to staff them (no longer a requirement).

Staff noted too much cross-contamination of materials for reaching the decision, with the efforts and costs going into the three-stream system not giving desired results.

Jay Stanford, Director, Environmental Programs & Solid Waste, Planning, Environmental & Engineering Services, took the time to speak to ACE at its meeting on Wednesday, November 6, 2013. He informed us that the goals for the festivals include:

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|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No litter                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Better garbage-handling system        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More recycling/garbage bins   | <input type="checkbox"/> Penalties for contaminated materials  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More tap water                | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteers, prioritizing them for all |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Missed recycling from vendors | <input type="checkbox"/> above                                 |

Out of the \$25 000/year budget in Mr. Stanford's department for "greening", staff aim to achieve the above while they also must supply the following services:

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Separate recycling   | <input type="checkbox"/> Supply water     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Separate food scraps | <input type="checkbox"/> Supply education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collect garbage      | <input type="checkbox"/> Take waste water |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up litter       |   |

These are the six issues currently facing the department:

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garbage piling up          | <input type="checkbox"/> 65% of organics did not reach the      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open garbage on the ground | <input type="checkbox"/> facility (compost not sorted properly) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increased litter           | <input type="checkbox"/> Recyclables being missed               |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge of getting volunteers        |

There are about 10 to 15 tonnes of rejected waste because of cross-contamination (e.g. non-organic waste being put into the compost). Diverting such waste from the landfill is imperative to extend the life of the landfill, which saves the City public money in the long term.

ACE recommends the City instruct staff to encourage the festival organizers to request the three-stream EcoStations going forward, while also continuing to recruit volunteers to run them and be properly trained. The money spent on this initiative may need to be increased, but it will offset larger costs of a new landfill site down the line. We also lose all of the investment in education to date: the learning process must continue, lest we lose the progress of the past seven festival seasons.