

The Bandera PROPHEET

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County-wide recycling program gains momentum

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The Bandera Prophet

The wheels of progress have picked up momentum for the county's recycling program. During their regular meeting yesterday, commissioners rubber-stamped a proposal to restart the initiative next month, pending the completion of a mutually-approved agreement. Pct. 4 Commissioner Jordan Rutherford said organizer Bob Brischetto contacted him several months ago regarding the recycling program, which was halted at the onset of the Covid pandemic. Formerly, jail inmates sorted through bags dropped off for recycling, which were often filled with trash, food and toxic waste, and other non-recyclable materials, placing the inmates at risk of exposure and costing the county money.

"We've come to a concesus... We'll try to open one day a week," Rutherford said, adding some changes would be implemented to improve the system. "This is not open to people just dropping off trash." Brischetto, who coordinates the annual Medina River Cleanup, said he has learned a few things through his efforts - including the importance of organizing volunteers, and working with city and county governments. "It's your recycling operation, we just want to help out with it," Brischetto told commissioners. "To do that, you're going to need some volunteers."

Brischetto said since the inaugural Bandera Recycles group meeting held April 22, interest has grown from about 40 in attendance to now 115 people signed up. The proposed operation site will be adjacent to the trash collection site at Mansfield Park in Bandera. Hours of operation will be Saturdays, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and it will be manned the entire

time, with volunteers supervising the intake. Items accepted will be limited to clear plastic drinking bottles (caps removed), aluminum cans and flattened corrugated cardboard.

Rutherford said any customers who try to drop off non-recyclable items will be taking them home.

“What you don’t accept goes with [customers] and they pay for the garbage,” Rutherford said.

Cautioning that volunteers may encounter unreasonable customers, Pct. 2 Bobby Harris asked Brischetto how they would handle potential confrontations.

“Who will settle the argument between a potential customer and volunteer,” Harris said. “The first one you’re going to hear is, ‘I’m a taxpayer and I have the right,’ when they want to drop off that milk jug. We don’t want to have a liability for a fist fight over plastic bottles.”

Rutherford added some customers may go so far as to throw any rejected materials out of their car windows and drive away.

Brischetto said volunteers would begin training Oct. 15, and go over those scenarios. He added their efforts would be examined at the end of the year to determine the viability of the program and whether it would continue.

County Judge Richard Evans said in the event of an altercation, the Sheriff’s Office should be contacted.

“Volunteers don’t need to confront people,” Evans said.

About \$2,500 has been allocated to the recycling program by Keep Texas Recycling, according to representative Rachel Herring.

Herring said plastic bottles, aluminum and cardboard were chosen for collection because of their marketability and volume. She said Keep Texas Recycling works with Coca Cola Southwest Beverages, which has launched an aggressive effort to recover and reuse plastic bottles.

Addressing the condition of recyclable items, Herring said education is key. She said a similar program in Uvalde had been successful.

“They’re already seeing a lot cleaner material and recovering a lot of material,” Herring said.