

SLSD from A1

on the school board in 2011 with an interest in exploring the connections between community and schools.

At the time, he had been contracted to look at Cottage Grove as a target for Oregon GEAR UP, a scholarship program which focuses on preparing Oregon’s low-income middle school and high school students to succeed in postsecondary education.

Part of his work involved driving through towns with school administrators, identifying establishments and coaxing out

ways the school district could interface with its local resources.

“So I was sort of set to be interested in being on a school board,” said Baas.

Though he lost his first run at the board by 40 votes, he ran again in 2012 and found himself in a seat.

Through the years, Baas has served as the board’s chair and vice chair and looks back on his legacy as one of building connections.

“I’ve never stopped working on better understanding how communities can help schools and how schools can reach out and gain from community,” he said. “I think I’ve been

able to bring school board awareness into a number of town conversations that have to do with the town learning how to take care of itself better.”

As a learning process in itself, Baas said he feels these conversations are beginning to come into maturity given the way technology is changing communication.

This May, Baas stepped down from the vice chair position when he realized his health was impeding his goals.

“At the same time, I really wanted people with more youthful vigor to be able to step into leadership roles with the school board,” he said.

Now Baas is stepping away from the board at a time he feels the entity is in a good place.

“I can say something very positive about every one of our board members,” he said. “And I think we’ve hired a good superintendent who understands the need to share responsibility and leadership and pay attention to how the future is biting at our heels.”

Baas said he looks forward to seeing the district make more use of technology as it finds its way through the pandemic and capitalize on new ways of connecting with families and parents. And, though stepping back from the

board, he is not done seeking connections between Cottage Grove and its school district.

“I don’t want to guarantee my ability to be a regular attendee at board meetings,” he said, “but you can trust that I’m going to be speaking out wherever I can about how we as a town can own ourselves as a town and do better for all of our young people.”

Fellow board members thanked Baas for his service on Monday night during the virtual board meeting.

“I just appreciate Alan’s thoughtfulness as he made decisions, the questions

he would ask and the perspective he got from the community,” said co-Vice Chair Sherri Duerst-Higgins.

Bengston encouraged other community members to emulate Baas’ commitment to the town and praised his approach.

“I always think of you as an instigator in the most positive sense of the word,” he said to Baas. “I think public service should be celebrated and what you have given to this district in difficult times — and at some personal cost — we are celebrating.”



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Frequently Asked Questions of EcoGeneration

David Gardiepy
EcoGeneration Founder and Executive Director

Working within several communities and with over 4,000 people now, handling over 20,000 pounds of recycling, we get a lot of questions. We encourage the questions, as it gets more people involved in understanding the impact that packaging is having on recycling infrastructure all the way through the production of the materials in the first place. As many people are starting to understand, plastic is not just this simple item that can be recycled. There are many steps involved ranging from sorting, to cleaning, and eventually ground down to nurdles. Because of the complexity and investment in some streams, the process is a guarded trade secret. However these are the top five questions that we get, that I can answer.

Why do you ask us to sort our materials?

All 1/2/4/5 materials are sorted by resin code for the simple reason of keeping like items together. We ask that you sort your materials so that it is easier for you and us the day of a Recycling Take Back. By sorting your like materials together, it allows you to go from each table grouping with ease. It also helps our volunteers focus on a single resin type. We ask the #2 jugs/ bottles be separated from their tub/lid counterparts, since the jugs/bottles have a different melting point. There are systems and machines that can sort large quantities of plastics; however, they tend to be very expensive and can be damaged by the wrong materials be sent through the line.

Why does everything have to be clean and dry?

All material has to be clean and dry for us to recycle it. Some of our processors do not have ‘wash lines’ for their materials. This includes one of our bigger plastic recyclers. If a processors does not have a wash line, they are unable to take dirty materials. Generally these recyclers cater to industrial plastic waste, as it is clean and ready to be reused as is. Denton Plastics, the processor the 2/4/5 plastics we collect is unable to recycle plastics that are dirty with food residue, with labels, or with too much food residue. We also ask the all materials are clean, as we really don’t want to smell the residue found on most of the recycling we collect. Materials have to be dry to ensure that all of our volunteers are protected. Many like to claim it is just water, but we have learned through trial and error, that its not always ‘just water’. It is also a serious safety concern. Side note-I chuckle when people instruct me to smell it, to check that it is just water. 7th grade science taught me to never sniff random items, while many may be benign, not all are. For this reason, we simply ask that all materials submitted to us are dry.

Why do you have to make it so complicated?

We hear this one a lot, and the first thing I like to say is simply, I am sorry. Yes it is somewhat complicated, and confusing at first glance. But the more you review the streams of recycling that we offer, the more you come to realize that we are actually making it very easy and convenient. Yes, there is a lot of information; however, we believe that by providing as many streams to recycle in as possible, we are letting you the consumer decide just how involved you want to be. Many of the streams can be accessed without our involvement, with some serious commitment and work. Some of the streams that we offer are paid for, by us as well. We work hard to let everyone make the decisions on what they would like to recycle.

Another reason for the multiple streams is to reduce the workload on you. Our Personal Care and Health &

Nutrition streams do allow labels to remain on the packaging. Many of these product packages are the hardest to remove labels from, and by offering these streams we hope to reduce the workload.

Where do the material that you collect go?

We have many processors for the materials that we collect, using a network that spans across the United States and now into BC. We work hard to recycle as close to home as possible, however some of our programs are shipped out. When materials are shipped, we work hard to ensure that they are carbon neutral, as does one of our recyclers TerraCycle since they pay the shipping fee for their materials. Other materials are shipped at our expense, to a few processors including Preserve, and we always select carbon neutral shipping. We also work to pack all boxes that we ship, as densely as possible. Other materials are transported up to Portland by Lane County Waste Management to a company called Denton Plastics. Here the 2/4/5 plastics are processed. We also take the dispensary pop-tops to a company called P3 who processes them. In terms of #1 bottles and jugs, those are sent to a material recovery facility- Garten Services. While we work hard to keep our recycling in the United States, we have recently expanded our shipping to include Merlin Plastics in Canada through the assistance of PakTech.

Don’t you make money of the materials?

The short answer is- not really. While we do make pennies per pound on some waste, it has never amount to over \$750 across everything that we have recycled to-date. Since we started accepting redeemable containers, we have seen an increase in ‘making money off materials’. With that being said, consider the cost of transportation and to hold a Recycling Take Back and you will quickly realize why we solicit donations and sponsors. Furthermore, the 2/4/5 materials are actually submitted to Lane County Waste Management who then transports them to Denton Plastics (Thankfully). The cost of transporting these materials has always outweighed any profit that has been seen, since the market for recycled plastics is still struggling to recover.

We are very thankful for our volunteers and their time. All of the volunteers I have worked with are dedicated recyclers who are passionate about ensure that materials are recovered. Without their help, EcoGeneration wouldn’t have been able to assist the community reduce the plastic that is sent to the landfill.



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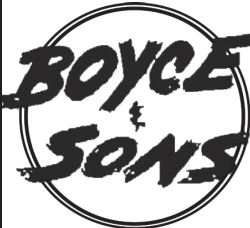
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