

# Long Beach

## BUSINESS JOURNAL

January 18-31, 2011

## Long Beach Moves Forward With Environmental Programs; Seeks Further Funding



The Diesel Reduction Emissions Act of 2010, authored by Congresswoman Laura Richardson and signed by President Obama, will create jobs and improve the nation's air quality by implementing programs to clean up diesel engine emissions from equipment and vehicles, such as 18-wheel trucks. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

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Local experts see continued progress in creating a sustainable Long Beach throughout 2011 with environmental programs in effect and new programs forthcoming.

"We can always be doing more, and that's the mission of the office of sustainability – to identify opportunities to continue to leverage our resources," Larry Rich, sustainability coordinator for the City of Long Beach's Office of Sustainability, said. Rich and sustainability coordinator Meredith Reynolds help secure grant funding for programs that help green the city as part of its Sustainable City Action Plan. Rich said the plan provides the "inspiration and impetus" to seek environmental related grants available from the state and the federal government. Through the office, the city has already enacted several programs that business owners and residents are benefiting from.

The city's residential energy efficiency rebate program continues this year, offering up to \$500 to residents who install Energy Star-rated devices that require a building permit, such as a solar hot water heater. The city has already given out 100 rebates, Rich said. The sustainability office is also monitoring feedback from participants of last year's rain barrel program, in which the city provided 100 rain barrels to residents in an effort to prevent runoff.

Positive feedback could result in program expansion for the next rainy season, Rich said.

Long Beach has been ahead of new state green building codes – that went into effect January 1 – that apply to new construction or expansions of existing structures, he said. CAL Green has been incorporated into the state's building code, which applies to all new development – residential, commercial and industrial. Rich referred to CAL Green as kind of a version of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) – a private building certification program that encourages sustainable building practices. Long Beach also incorporated low-impact development standards, which offer new ways of dealing with storm water runoff. The rules, which have already been adopted by the Long Beach City Council, don't go into effect until July 1 to allow time for educating the development community. "The final intent or result of this is meant to be better water quality in our rivers, bays and ocean," Rich said.

Another item for new developments is the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, which Rich said comes to fruition this year after being adopted in 2010. The ordinance requires certain new developments to design drought tolerant landscapes with plants that need little water to survive and using highly efficient irrigation systems. "It's the right thing to do, and it saves them money in the long run on utilities and water costs and so on," he said. "We

hope to see additional programs that can potentially help people along that way, but we really don't have any of those to talk about."

Where the sustainability office's reach is stretched, other departments assist in the city's environmental efforts. The Long Beach Water Department recently began the Proven Water Savings Program, a \$250,000 program that allows the department to work with businesses on an individual basis to document what they are doing to save water, according to Matthew Lyons, director of planning and conservation. He said the department assumes it will take a while for projects to come to fruition, but once they do the research, each project could take one or two years. "We really want to work with our business customers," Lyons said. "We will bend over backward [for them]."

Tom Bowman, president of Bowman Design, Inc. in Signal Hill, set an example of how to save money and go green with his business, based on the goals of Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the California Global Warming Solutions Act.

"The opportunity is for people to be more receptive to the kinds of things people were hesitant during the recession," he said, suggesting that businesses start with the lowest hanging fruit for energy efficiency. His business reduced its carbon footprint by two-thirds in 18 months and now saves \$9,000 annually. "Every time you make a decision, ask yourself if there's an energy-focused decision. It doesn't take a lot to get used to it," Bowman said.

A local hazardous waste facility is set to open this summer in Signal Hill, providing a much-needed hub in L.A. County to dispose of electronic waste, medical waste, pesticides and other hazardous waste items residents and businesses produce. The Household Hazardous Waste Facility is to be part of EDCO's facility at 2755 California Ave. and will be open on Saturday mornings. Facility operations will cost \$600,000 annually, funded by the county.

### **2011 Environmental Legislation And Local Impacts**

Congresswoman Laura Richardson, representing parts of Long Beach within the 37th Congressional District, praised President Obama for signing a bill she authored to create jobs and improve the nation's air quality. On January 5, Obama signed into law the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act of 2010 (DERA), which will require further upgrading and modernization of older diesel engines and equipment – regulations that were set to expire this year – for an additional five years. DERA was originally passed as part of the 2005 Energy Policy Act. According to her Web site, DERA extends the current program of grants and loans, as well as creates a rebate program, all while simplifying the application process and expanding program eligibility. The bill was co-sponsored by Congresswoman Doris Matsui, representing the 5th Congressional District of California.

DERA in action would support the vehicle greenhouse gas emissions reductions required by AB 32. As of January 1, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) had completed the major rulemakings related to the regulations of AB 32. Only a handful of businesses in the Long Beach and Los Angeles areas need to comply with the regulations of AB 32, according to Stanley Young, public information officer for CARB. AB 32 regulations, which aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, apply to very large emitters such as oil refineries and power generation facilities.

Such businesses are required to look at ways of improving their operations to reduce emissions by 15 percent over the next decade. "In 2011, only a couple of the regulations are actually in effect and they don't really start to produce results until the back end of the decade," Young said. He said nothing will produce results in the

next 12 months, but businesses need to start thinking about ways to approach the reduction requirements now. "Ultimately it will be up to all of us, citizens and businesses alike, to reduce our carbon footprint," Young said.

One way Long Beach businesses can do their part is by complying with a new recycling rule going into effect January 1, 2012, through AB 32. According to Long Beach's Environmental Services Bureau Manager Jim Kuhl, businesses that produce more than four cubic yards of solid waste and recyclables must subscribe to recycling services, which many haulers offer by request. "The thing about recycling if you're a business, what you're putting in your trash can you've already paid for," he said. "So anything you can do to minimize the amount of stuff you're putting in your trash can, you're saving money."

The city council is likely to approve two proposals this spring that would also assist in the city's recycling efforts. Vice Mayor Suja Lowenthal proposed a ban on plastic bags in large grocers who do more than \$2 million in business a year, expected to be voted on in February or March. Customers can either use their own reusable bag or purchase a recycled paper bag in the store for a dime, according to Kuhl. Statewide legislation to ban plastic bags failed in the California Senate in August 2010, yet Los Angeles County banned them after conducting an environmental impact report adopted by the board of supervisors. The report is available for any city in the county to use as part of individual implementation plans.

Currently, city officials are looking into how the ban would be implemented, how to educate consumers on the ban and what the city can do to minimize the impacts on grocery stores and consumers. Kuhl said the city is investigating grocers who have already eliminated plastic bags from their business, such as Trader Joe's. "It's going to be a big change for everybody, and so we're trying to determine how we can ease that for business and impacted consumers," he said.

The second proposal is for a program called Long Beach Shares, modeled after an existing program through the City of Los Angeles. According to Kuhl, businesses can post used items online to donate to nonprofits instead of the items ending up in a landfill. An example, Kuhl said, would be if a bank changed out its office furniture. That bank could post the inventory of furniture on the Long Beach Shares Web page, where an administrator could match the items to a nonprofit in need of furniture. The program would be free to businesses and nonprofits, and each donation would be tax deductible. The city is working with the Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership, which Kuhl said receives many calls from businesses looking to donate. The item should come back to the council for a vote in March. ■