

# ADVISORY COMMUNICATION



**To:** City Council

**From:** Energy and Environment Commission

**Date:** June 3, 2014

**Subject:** Advisory Communication – Energy and Environment Commission, waste reduction-carbon reduction goal- replacing plastic water vending machines with water stations

**Attachments:**

## **Action Requested:**

The EEC recommends that City Council direct the City Manager to work with staff to remove plastic-bottle water vending machines and sale of disposable water bottles on city property, and install water hydration stations capable of filling reusable water bottles at city buildings and park locations by the end of 2015.

Disposable water bottles have a significant negative impact on the environment, as discussed below. Many entities, including the Edina Schools, are encouraging the use of reusable water containers by adding disposable water bottles hydration stations capable of quickly filling reusable bottles. In addition, the City can design and sell reusable water bottles to replace at least part of the revenue that the city has realized from selling disposable bottles

EEC encourages the City to set an example for its commercial and residential sector by reducing plastic waste and emphasizing the importance of re-use rather than disposal.

## **Situation:**

The Commission's research indicates that the City realizes a profit of approximately \$22,000-30,000/year from the sale of disposable water bottles. Our understanding is that the City declined to consider halting sales because it did not want to lose the revenue. With City operating revenue of about \$35 million, bottled water sales represent .0006% of operating revenue and an even smaller fraction of total city revenues. EEC strongly recommends that the City take a leadership role by moving from disposal to reuse and adopting creative ways to replace revenue. The environmental impact of the current status is not insignificant:

- Approximately 3 liters of water are used to package 1 liter.
- Production of bottled water, not including transportation, produces approximate 2.5 million tons of GHG nationally.
- Only 20% of plastic water bottles are recycled; 80% are thrown away, with 2 million tons of these bottles landfilled each year.



- In the US, annual production of plastic bottles uses the equivalent of 50 million barrels of oil.

**Background:**

The City should join the Edina Public Schools in encouraging the reduction the sale of disposable water bottles. Edina High School students started an awareness and fundraising campaign in the 2011-12 school year. Through their efforts, the school now has installed 5 hydration stations in the high school. The use of water bottles has decreased significantly, with most students relying on reusable water bottles. Other Edina schools, including South View and Countryside, have similar fundraising efforts underway and several have installed hydration stations. If lost revenue is a concern, the City can design and sell reusable water bottles to replace at least some of those funds. An opportunity could be to work with the Arts and Culture Commission to design reusable water bottles and promote City artists.

**Assessment:**

The EEC is not aware of any barriers to implementing this recommendation. The City's decision to move from disposable to reusable water bottles would send a strong sustainability message to the community.

**Recommendation:**

The EEC recommends that the City Council direct the City Manager to work with staff to remove plastic-bottle water vending machines and sale of disposable water bottles on city property, and install water hydration stations capable of filling reusable water bottles at city buildings and park locations by the end of 2015.