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NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Letter

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Steven Lederer - Director
Environmental Management
REPORT BY: Steven Lederer, DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL MGT, 259-8228
SUBJECT: Restaurant Inspections (Grading and Posting) update

RECOMMENDATION

Director of Environmental Management to present a follow up report on the status of restaurant inspections and the coordinated effort between the Department of Environmental Management and the restaurant industry to maintain and communicate to the public a high level of food safety and cleanliness within Napa County retail food establishments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following two meetings with the Board of Supervisors last year, the Department of Environmental Management has been working with the retail food industry to determine the most efficient manner to ensure the highest practical level of food safety and cleanliness, and how to communicate the latest status of facility inspections to members of the public that are meaningful and complete but not burdensome to either the Department or the industry.

The program proposed includes several key elements:

- | Public disclosure of inspection reports via the County web site and on-site availability of the inspection reports;
- | Improved performance (or in most cases continued excellent performance) through the offering of a short training class for all food handlers;
- | Recognition of facilities, through and "Award of Excellence" program, for those facilities that go beyond compliance;
- | Improved inspection processes that allow for greater communication between the Department and the facility and quicker correction times when deficiencies are found;
- | Aggressive enforcement of those facilities failing to consistently meet acceptable standards.

Each of these elements is discussed in more detail later in this agenda item. The purpose of this agenda item is

to update the Board of Supervisors, to obtain any further input from members of the public on this topic, and receive any directions the Board may have on this issue.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

There is no Environmental Impact for this item.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

The Department of Environmental Management regularly inspects and grades retail food facilities on their cleanliness, food handling, and overall safety of their operations. As a result of the general public's demands for information relative to inspections, state law (CURFFL) was changed in 2000 and required food facilities to maintain the most recent inspection report at the food facility and post a notice advising patrons that a copy is available for review by interested parties. In 2005, the Board held two hearings to discuss with the Department the best method for communicating the results of these inspections to the public, following a series of articles in the Napa Register. Discussions with the Board included members of Chambers of Commerce, restaurant owners, and other members of the public. No consensus was reached at that time.

Since the meetings with the Board of Supervisors last year, the Department of Environmental Management has been working with members of the retail food industry to determine the most efficient manner to ensure the highest practical level of food safety and sanitation and how to communicate the latest status of facility inspections to members of the public that are meaningful and complete but not burdensome to either the Department or the industry.

The program proposed includes several key elements:

- | Continue to **disclose** the routine inspection reports via the County web site and continue inspecting for on-site availability of the inspection reports;
- | Improved performance (or in most cases continued excellent performance) through the offering of a short **training** class for all food handlers;
- | **Recognition** of facilities through an "Award of Excellence" program for those facilities that go beyond compliance;
- | Improved **inspection** processes that allow for greater communication between the Department and the facility and quicker correction times when deficiencies are found; and
- | Aggressive **enforcement** of those facilities consistently failing to meet minimum sanitation standards.

The Department notes that the industry in Napa County is currently achieving over 96% A and B grades on their inspection reports, a percentage well above most other jurisdictions. The goal of our program is to encourage an even higher percentage, while protecting public health and providing the public information they need to make informed choices.

Each element of the program is described in more detail below. It should be noted that this approach was

developed in collaboration with several members of the industry, although, of course, with over 700 permitted facilities not every one could be involved in this process.

Public Disclosure:

Complete inspection reports are now available for any citizen to look at on the County internet web site. For those who are not internet compatible, hard copies are available at the County offices. Additionally, each retail food facility is required to keep a copy of the most recent inspection report on site for any member of the public to review. The Department will also report summary food scores to the Board on an annual basis.

Improved Performance Through Training:

The Department will be offering a series of classes for all personnel who handle food. Currently, only one person per facility is required to pass an accredited statewide food safety certification. Napa County currently offers a 6 hour class put on by the Department in conjunction with UC Cooperative Extension that allows employees to become certified. However, the industry has requested a "short course" for a much wider range of their personnel. Both the industry and the Department believe that if more personnel are trained on the basics of food handling, overall performance will improve. Though voluntary, interest in this training is very high. The Department can accommodate this request in a revenue neutral manner by charging a small fee for the course (probably \$25.00/student, or a minimum of \$400.00 per class). The class will be offered in English and Spanish (at a minimum). Facilities can provide an interpreter for their employees if the class is not offered in the necessary language. Students completing the class will be provided with a certificate of completion.

Recognition:

An "Award of Excellence" program will be developed to encourage retail food facilities to perform at the highest level. Those facilities that achieve an "A" score for the previous year with no critical violations and that train over 80% of their personnel using the "short course" discussed above will be eligible for recognition (a certificate to hang in their facility and perhaps other forms of communication to the public) in this program. These facilities will be able to rightly say they are going "beyond compliance".

Improved Inspection Processes:

The Department is working with the industry to ensure the inspection process is as accurate, efficient, and objective as possible. We have agreed to provide 48 hours for a food safety certified employee or owner to discuss a report before it is posted to the internet and to provide a formal appeal process where needed. The Department is also considering reinspection requests (when workload allows), so that when a problem is found it can be fixed and reinspected promptly, rather than waiting until the next inspection for a review.

Aggressive Enforcement:

It is expected that the education and improved performance of the vast majority of our facilities will provide the inspector with more time to bring the remaining low scoring facilities into compliance.

The Department solicits input from the Board and any additional comments from the public prior to full implementation of this program.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

None

CEO Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Andrew Carey