



DATE: March 25, 2020

TO: Waste Management Authority Board

FROM: Justin Lehrer, Senior Management Analyst

SUBJECT: Reusable Food Ware Pilot Projects

SUMMARY

At the January 22, 2020 meeting, following a discussion of reusable food ware policy options for Alameda County, the WMA Board directed staff to explore and begin developing reusable food ware pilot projects. Board members requested that staff return soon with an update on the progress and implementation plan for the pilots. At the March 25, 2020 WMA meeting staff will provide an update on progress, desirable pilot scenarios, and plans for soliciting and selecting partners who will participate in the pilots.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the pilot projects is to evaluate different reusable food ware solutions, better understand the financial and environmental impacts of switching from single-use to reusable food ware, and to begin developing reusable cup and container infrastructure and services that are currently not available in the county.

In the time since the January 22 WMA meeting, staff has documented reusable food ware services in the United States and other countries ([Attachment 1](#)). This research helped staff identify different types of solutions available, along with challenges they face and opportunities. As staff has previously stated, most solutions in this realm are nascent and still emerging; relatively few have been implemented at a scale that is transferable to an area with the size and diverse environments of Alameda County.

During this same time period, public health concerns related to the spread of the COVID-19 virus have risen to the top of our collective awareness. These concerns have negatively impacted public perception around reusables, and several highly visible food service operators have temporarily stopped refilling reusable cups and containers brought in by their customers (Attachment 2). In light of these developments, staff recommends that we continue to move forward with planning for the pilot projects, but not launch any pilots until the current situation resolves and concern around reusables subsides.

Staff identified several scenarios that are desirable to include in the pilots:

Solution	Affected Establishments
Off-site dishwashing, linen, or other reusable services	Dine-in restaurants and food service operations that lack dishwashing capacity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business districts • Concentrated areas/heavy traffic zones • Large fast food chain

Food delivery in reusable containers that are collected back for reuse	<p>Closed-loop meal delivery services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals on Wheels • Caterers
Reusable cups and containers in fully captive systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festivals & Fairs • Stadiums/Arenas • Large event venues
Reusable food ware services for institutional on-site dining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • Healthcare facilities • Corporate cafeterias • Hotels
Reusable food ware services for multiple food establishments in a concentrated, primarily captive system for dining in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food courts • Marketplaces • Plazas
Cold/hot cup and container sharing services for quick-serve food service operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast food chains • Restaurants – take out • Food trucks • Coffee Shops

Each of the above scenarios offer potential for learning and working through implementation challenges, information and data gathering, and the potential to scale up and offer measurable results in Alameda County. However, pursuing all of them is not realistic given limitations in funding and timeframe. Additional criteria to be considered when selecting pilot projects include matching reusable programs with locations geographically distributed around Alameda County, and most importantly, whether partnerships can be readily formed between member agencies, reusable food ware vendors, and food service operators willing to participate in the process.

Pilot Selection Process and Funding Request

In order to identify and select vendors for the pilot projects, staff will issue an RFQ soliciting services and solutions from reusable food ware service providers. The search for qualified vendors is expected to begin in April, or possibly later pending the public health crisis. The result of a successful RFQ will be a list of qualified vendors, along with proposed project scenarios for each vendor and estimated costs. Staff will take this information and work with member agency staff to identify specific project opportunities where there are strong relationships with food service operators, willingness to provide funds, and commitment of staff time to support the process.

At the January WMA meeting staff estimated a \$400,000 investment in the pilot projects. While this amount is not likely enough to fund each of the scenarios listed above, staff feels it is enough to pursue some projects and gather meaningful data. Although we do not recommend launching any pilot projects until the public health concerns subside, we recognize significant interest from the Board and other stakeholders in moving forward quickly, and authorization of funds is requested now so that the process can move forward and projects can be prepared and launched as soon as circumstances improve.

As this process unfolds, staff will continue to gather and review available data from other initiatives, such as the reusable cup pilot led by the Ecology Center in Berkeley, and the reusable cup pilot programs in San Francisco and Palo Alto, an effort driven by McDonald’s and Starbucks.

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize staff to transfer \$400,000 from existing fund balance to Project 3280: Reusable Food Ware for use in implementing reusable food ware pilot projects.

Attachment 1: Reusable Food Ware Services

Company	Category	Who Washes? (scheme, vendor, consumer)	Description	Years of Operation	Participating Businesses	Area	Cost	Who is the Idea Pitched to?	Status	Website	Scale (local, national, international)
AgainAgain	coffee cups	vendor	A reusable cup lending system, for on-demand takeaway coffee without the landfill. Cafes, campuses, take out venues. Uses a plain stainless steel cup with disposable corrugated thermal sleeve. Similar to ReCup, has about 200 participants.	N/A	~200	New Zealand	Have pricing on website, charge a customer deposit plus a monthly fee.	Vendors, consumers	active	https://www.againagain.co/	national
Bevi	to-go cups/beverage containers*	no container	customized beverage dispenser system for offices, offers sparkling, pure, flavored water.	N/A	N/A	North America	lease starts at \$349/month	Facility managers	active	https://www.bevi.co/	local
BizeeBox	food serviceware to-go	N/A	Offers reusable to-go containers for cafeterias, website doesn't provide many details	N/A	N/A	San Diego	N/A	Facility managers	N/A	http://www.bizeebox.com/	local
Boston Tea Party	coffee cups	vendor	Bans disposable cups at all locations, have their own loan cups on a deposit system, 22 locations in Britain. Cups from ecoffeecup. Report that takeaway hot drink sales have fallen by 24% since ban.	Since 2018	22 locations	Britain	4.50 pound deposit	Consumers	active	https://bostonteparty.co.uk/blog/post.php?s=2018-12-01-cup-ban-six-months-in	National
Coca-Cola Brazil Universal Bottle	to-go cups/beverage containers	no container	on-demand takeaway coffee	Since 2018	N/A	Latin America	N/A	Consumers	active	https://www.cocacolabrazil.com.br/historias/coca-cola-brasil-unifica-formato-de-embalagens-retornaveis	international
Coca-Cola Freestyle	to-go cups/beverage containers	no container	without the landfill.	since 2009	N/A	Worldwide	N/A	Consumers	active	https://www.coca-colafreestyle.com/	international
Coffee Cup Collective	coffee cups	scheme	Actively distribute, track and clean reusable cups so that they are available to subscribers at cafes, corporate and college campuses, and at events. Stainless steel travel mug.	2019	7	Boston	Customers sign up for \$4 to \$10 a month and save \$.25 off cup, fee charged if cup lost or damaged	Vendors, consumers	pilot	https://www.coffeecupcollective.com/	Local
Costa Clever Cup	coffee cups	consumer	Reusable coffee cup with contactless payment capability for Costa coffee shop chain in Uk, teamed up with Barclay card. Also offers discount for reusable cup.	since 2018	3,800 locations	UK	N/A	Consumers	active	https://www.costa.co.uk/responsibility/our-cups/	national
Cup Club	dine-in	scheme	Partners with catering companies, facilities management providers, retailers, campuses, to provide cup service in-house, NOT to-go. Offers RFID tracking technology.	Since 2018	N/A	London	Vendor pays fee 15p per drink	Both vendors and customers	start-up	https://cupclub.com/	local
CupZero	events	scheme	Drop-off, pick-up, washes, stores cup scheme, plastic beer cups for events	N/A	N/A	NYC, Queens, Brooklyn	N/A	Event managers	can't tell	https://www.cupzero.com/	local
DabbaDrop	meal delivery	vendor	Subscription service for ready-made meals delivered to the doorstep in Indian-style, reusable tiffin boxes. Boxes are swapped for new ones every time a meal is delivered.	N/A	N/A	UK	\$32/28 for 2 person serving	Consumers	active	https://dabbadrop.co.uk/	local
Dabbawala	meal delivery	vendor	Century-old lunch delivery service to offices in reusable tiffin boxes, delivers 200,000 meals a day.	Since 1890	N/A	Mumbai	N/A	Facility managers	active	https://mumbaidabbawala.in/	local
Dasani Pure Fill	to-go cups/beverage containers	no container	Refill stations offering free filtered water with the option to add flavour and carbonation for a small fee. App alls for cashless payment.	N/A	N/A	US	N/A	Consumers, facility managers	pilot	N/A	national
Deliveround	food serviceware to-go	N/A	takout delivery food in reusable packaging, uses an app, website provides few details.	N/A	N/A	Hasselt, Belgium	N/A	N/A	pilot	https://vlaanderen-circulair.be/nl/doeners-in-vlaanderen/detail/deliveround	local
DeliverZero	food serviceware to-go	vendor	Consumers order take-out from participating restaurants and ask for reusables, they deliver in polypropylene clamshells and tupperware, pick-up empties from customers or vendors.	N/A	17	NYC, Queens, Brooklyn	Charge \$3.25 per container, restaurants may charge delivery or pick-up fee.	Consumers, vendors	active	https://www.deliverzero.com/	local

Attachment 1: Reusable Food Ware Services, Cont.

Company	Category	Who Washes? (scheme, vendor, consumer)	Description	Years of Operation	Participating Businesses	Area	Cost	Who is the Idea Pitched to?	Status	Website	Scale (local, national, international)
Dishcraft	dine-in	scheme	Offers dishware service, drop off clean dishes and pick up dirties.	Since 2015	N/A	San Francisco Bay Area	Pricing based on size of office	Facility managers, event managers, venues	active	https://dishcraft.com/	local
Dishjoy	dine-in	scheme	Offers office dishware service, drop off clean dishes and pick up dirties everyday.	N/A	N/A	San Francisco Bay Area	Pricing based on size of office	Facility managers, event managers, venues	active	http://www.dishjoy.com/	local
Dispatch	food serviceware to-go	scheme	Offers reusable food ware services to corporate campuses, individuals, and food delivery app customers. Reuse in-house and to-go. Corporations can become drop-off area for their employees. Website has few details.	Since 2020	10	San Francisco	uncertain	Vendors, consumers	start-up	https://dispatchgoods.com/home#contact	local
Dreamzero	food serviceware to-go, events	vendor	Enables reusable dishware at events, retail, corporate offices and institutions. Offers coffee cups, clamshells, and beverage containers for events.	Since 2019	N/A	Toronto	N/A	Vendors, consumers	start-up	https://dreamzero.ca/	local
Drinkfill	to-go cups/beverage containers	consumer	Vending machine that allows people to use reusable containers. Website doesn't provide many details.	N/A	N/A	Vancouver	N/A	Facility managers, consumers	active	https://www.drinkfill.com/	local
EcoBox	food serviceware to-go	vendor	Deposit-return scheme for to-go tupperware, also offers cutlery. Restaurants can order more ecoboxes, excessive returns can be returned and restaurant receives deposit.	N/A	100	Luxembourg	5 euro deposit containers, 10 cutlery	Vendors, consumers	active	https://ecobox.lu/en/	national (well, it's Luxembourg)
Elon Dining	dine-in	vendor	Reusable to-go containers for University residential dining	N/A	1	Elon, North Carolina	Free to residents with meal plan, \$7 for lost containers	Facility managers	active	https://www.elondining.com/sustainability/re-usable-to-go-boxes/	local
Enviro-cups	events	N/A	Stainless cup designed for events developed by a manufacturer in Birmingham, UK. Customers pay a deposit on first drink, either return for deposit or keep cup, idea is to refill as often as possible, could be a health code violation in some areas. Website doesn't provide many details on how the scheme works.	N/A	90 festivals	UK, Norway, Canada	N/A	Event managers, consumers	active	https://www.enviro-cup.co.uk/	international
Fill it Forward	to-go cups/beverage containers	consumer	Customer purchases a tag and sticks it on a water bottle or coffee cup. Download app, each time you refill, you scan the tag, each refill FillItForward donates a cup of clean water to someone in need.	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$4.95 per tag to participate	Consumers	active	https://www.fillitforward.com/	international
Freiburg Cup	coffee cups	vendor	Shared reuse coffee cup scheme initiated by the city of Freiburg. Customer pays a deposit, cups are cleaned and put back into circulation.	since 2016	137	Freiburg, Germany	cup is 1 euro, lid is 50 cents	Consumers	active	https://freiburgcup.de/index.php	local
Fresh Bowl	food serviceware to-go*	scheme	Vending machine serving fresh meals stocked daily and sold in reusable glass jars. The glass jars can be returned to the machine for a USD 2 credit towards next purchase. There seems to be 5 kiosks.	N/A	5	New York City	\$2 deposit on jars	Consumers	pilot	https://www.myfreshbowl.com/	local
Globelet	events*	scheme	Rents reusable plastic tumblers, coffee cups, vinos, and water bottles for events, shopping centres and offices. Made from recycled bottle caps. Attendees pay a deposit for first drink, and can exchange cup for the rest of the event. Trackable.	Since 2012	400	Australia & New Zealand	vendors rent for \$.45 each, lost tumblers cost \$1, purchase for \$2	Event managers	active	https://globelet.com/	national
GO Box	food serviceware to-go	scheme	App-based subscription service for reusable food service ware at participating restaurants, markets, and other vendors. For take out and delivery. Only a small listing of SF Vendors as of Feb, 2020. They collect from drop-off locations, wash and return boxes to vendors. About 100 vendors participate in Portland.	Since 2011	100	Portland & San Francisco	Consumers subscribe for 24.95/year or 3.95/month	Vendors, consumers	active	https://www.goboxpdx.com/	local 130

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GO2Cup	coffee cups	scheme and vendor	Reusable plastic coffee cups to go, has washing facility but scheme can also wash. Also seems to offer food service ware.	N/A	16	Perth, AU	Free to customer, not clear how much it costs to vendor	Vendors, consumers	active	http://go2cup.com.au/	local
Green Goblet	events	scheme*	Create custom reusable polypropylene cups for events like concerts and sports, customer either pays a deposit which will be refunded at the end of the event, or pays outright for the cup and keeps it.	N/A	N/A	UK	N/A	Concert organizers, venues, event managers	active	http://www.green-goblet.com/	national
Green Tiffin	meal delivery	vendor	Deliver lunches to offices in reusable bags using stainless steel tiffin containers, and then pick up empties. Can also pick up at designated green stations in a few neighborhoods in SF.	Since 2013	N/A	San Francisco	\$11 per meal plus 2.50 delivery, pick-up is free of delivery charges. \$25 tiffin deposit.	Consumers	active	https://www.greentiffin.com/	local
Greenbox Project	food serviceware to-go	scheme	App-based subscription service for reusable to-go containers for food vendors.	Since 2018	26	Durham, North Carolina	Consumers subscribe for \$25 per year	Vendors, consumers	active	https://durhamgreentogo.com/	local
Hannoccino	coffee cups	vendor	Biodegradable cups that can be washed hundreds of times, cups owned by street cleaning? Translation is a little funny	Since 2017	180	Hannoccino, Germany	provided for free with 2 euro deposit	Vendors, consumers	active	https://hannoccino.de/faq/	local
HuskeeCup	coffee cups	vendor	Coffee cup made from coffee husks, businesses buy cups to join up, sell them and swap them, customers buy a cup to join up, they can swap their dirty cup in and get a clean one. Cool looking cup, 3 sizes, universal lid, thermal properties.	N/A	~1,000	Started in Australia, global	\$16 to \$20 per cup	Consumers, vendors	active	https://huskee.co/	international
Less Mess	events	N/A	reusable tableware for events, website not working.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	not-active	website not working	N/A
Meu Copo Eco	events	N/A	Reusable cups for beer and other beverages for events and sport stadiums	N/A	N/A	Brazil	N/A	Event managers	active	https://www.meucopoeco.com.br/site/	national
Muuse (revolv on Macarthur doc)	coffee cups	scheme	App-based reusable coffee cup service, subscribe, scan qr code on cup, can use for takeout coffee from retail, return at any drop-off location. Mentions food containers but no details. Has 20 locations in Bali	N/A	30	Singapore, Hong Kong, Bali and coming to USA	\$10 deposit on cup, currently free although mention subscription plan coming soon!	Vendors, consumers	start-up	https://www.muuse.io/	local
Nalgene, RockNRefill	events	consumer	Sell custom Nalgene bottles at major concerts and provide filling stations. Bottles can be reused during and after the concert to replace disposable water bottles.	Since 2006	N/A	U.S.	N/A	Concert organizers, venues, event managers	active	https://www.nalgene.com/reverb/	national
Newcy	to-go cups/beverage containers	scheme	reusable cups for vending machines and water coolers for offices. Cups are washed and put back into circulation. 42 companies participate	N/A	42	France	N/A	Facility managers	active	https://newcy.fr/	local
NextGen Cup	coffee cups	N/A	Trying to stimulate more sustainable cup options, focus on making cups more recyclable, and developing reusable cup service models, gave awards to: CupClub, RECUP, Muuse.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	active	https://www.nextgenconsortium.com/	international
Ozarka	food serviceware to-go	scheme	reusable takeaway packaging as a service. Deposit based, Ozarka provides and washes reusables. Looks like 3 restaurants participate. Claims to be about the same prices as disposables.	N/A	3	Amsterdam	Claims to cost about the same as disposables.	Vendors, consumers	start-up	https://www.ozarka.club/	local
Ozzi	dine-in*	vendor	reusable to-go serviceware for institutions/campuses, offers whole system: containers, smart drop-off stations, dishwashing racks. Could be cost effective for big campuses, hospitals. Has a cost calculator on website. Looks like a large number of organizations participate. Claims to have averted 5 million containers.	N/A	~hundreds	U.S.	scaleable, has cost calculator	Facility managers	active	https://www.planetozzi.com/	national
Pepsi Spire	to-go cups/beverage containers	no container	machine/app that dispenses Pepsi products and consumers can use their own cups, but disposables also available. App lets you customize drinks, not entirely sure how it works.	since 2010	N/A	Worldwide	N/A	Consumers	active	https://pepsispire.com/	international

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PepsiCo Hydration Platform	to-go cups/beverage containers	no container	Carbonated and still water dispenser, smartphone app, and a personalized QR code sticker for reusable bottles targeted to workplaces, universities and hospitality.	since 2020	N/A	US	N/A	Facility managers	pilot	https://www.pepsico.com/sustainability/beyond-the-bottle	national
Planted Table	meal delivery	vendor	Deliver meals to homes or offices in reusable bags and glass containers, and then pick up empties.	N/A	N/A	San Francisco Bay Area	\$18 per meal, 6 meals/week	Consumers	active	https://plantedtable.com/	local
P-Lux	to-go cups/beverage containers	not clear	reusable beer cups shared among cafes around a city square. Deposit system. Citizen collective. Also provides reusable cups to events. Website has few details.	N/A	N/A	Brussels	N/A	Vendors, event managers	active	http://goplasticfree.be/	local
Portal	food serviceware to-go	vendor	Portal bowl, reusable to-go meal container made out of polypropylene, good explanation of vendor scheme. In early pilot phase.	Since 2019	N/A	NYC	N/A	Vendors, consumers	pilot	https://www.portaleats.com/	local
Rcup	events	N/A	Create custom reusable plastic cups for events like concerts and sports, customer either pays a deposit which will be refunded at the end of the event, or pays outright for the cup and keeps it. Returned cups are either reused or upcycled. Website has few details.	N/A	N/A	N/A	No upfront cost?	Concert organizers, venues, event managers	active	https://rcup.com/	national
reBox/recircle	food serviceware to-go	vendor	reusable serveware for on-the-go takeaway food, over 1000 vendors. National network. Also has coffee cups. Sounds like vendors can join for free for 3 months, and then you buy containers and sell them/deposit to consumers for 10 francs. Vendors wash containers. Have a wide variety of containers.	Since 2016	1,000	Switzerland	vendors buy containers, pay an annual membership, consumers pay deposit	Vendors, consumers	active	https://www.recircle.ch/	national
RECUP	coffee cups	vendor	shared reuse coffee cup scheme for cafes and restaurants. Deposit cup for coffee-to-go. Has an app. Available throughout Germany. Customer chooses RECUP, pays deposit, returns cup to any partner and gets deposit back. Also provides in-house solution. 4700 vendors including some chains.	since 2016	4,700	Germany	1 euro deposit	Vendors, facility managers,	active	https://recup.de/	national
Refill	to-go cups/beverage containers	consumer	App mapping publicly accessible water taps, businesses sign up as refill stations so anyone who downloads the app can find places to fill their water bottle for free	N/A	20,000	Worldwide	Free!	Vendors, consumers	active	https://refill.org.uk/	international
RETURNR	food serviceware to-go	vendor	reusable takeaway packaging for café/lunch food. Use stainless steel cups and tupperware bowls, looks like they have about 100 vendors. Model very similar to reBox. Café buys containers charges deposit. Has a nicely written description/instructions.	N/A	100	Australia	vendors buy containers, charge deposit	Vendors, consumers	start-up	https://returnr.org/	national
Sharepack	food serviceware to-go	vendor	reusable packaging solution for meals ordered through online platforms, customers return containers to drop-off locations. Restaurants wash and reuse them. Website not working.	N/A	N/A	Amsterdam	N/A	N/A	pilot?	N/A	N/A
Shrewsbury Cup	coffee cups	vendor	Shared reuse coffee cup scheme in the City of Shrewsbury. Customer pays a deposit, cups are cleaned and put back into circulation. Community Interest Company sponsored by Business Improvement District, inspired by the Freiburg cup	since 2019	25	Shrewsbury, UK	1 pound deposit	Vendors, consumers	active	http://www.shrewsburycup.co.uk/	local
Stack Cup	events	vendor	reusable beer cups designed to allow users to easily carry multiple full cups at events. Help events manage reusable cup schemes, sell them cups, vendor handles cleaning.	N/A	N/A	UK	N/A	Event managers	active	https://www.stack-cup.com/	national
Steelys Drinkware	events	consumer	Works with music festivals to offer reusable stainless steel cups and water bottles as an alternative to disposables, similar to the Nalgene scheme. Also distributes stainless steel drinkware.	Since 2007	N/A	San Francisco	Water bottles \$5, souvenir beer pint cups \$15 (plus beer)	Concert organizers, venues, event managers	active	https://steelysdrinkware.com/products/	local

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Sudbusters	events	N/A	Reusable dish program for large events and festivals, doesn't have website.	Since 2002	N/A	Festivals in California and Nevada	N/A	Concert organizers, venues, event managers	started back up in 2019	N/A	statewide?
Tiffin	food serviceware to-go	consumer	Sell tiffin boxes, people use them at participating restaurants, cafes, food shops, wash their own containers.	N/A	32?	Brussels	20 euros	Consumers, vendors	active	https://tiffin.be/	local
Vanilla Bean	food serviceware to-go	Vendor	Digital vegan restaurant guide with 300,000 users, will test reusable serveware delivery in Berlin. Partner with a sustainable logistics partner. Users order food, it's delivered in reusable containers, previous containers are collected and returned to any participating restaurant, tracked with QR.	Since 2019	N/A	Berlin	N/A	Vendors, consumers	pilot	https://vegconomist.com/interviews/vanilla-bean-its-time-for-a-new-way-of-delivering-packaging-free-food-delivery-is-possible/	local
Vessel	coffee cups	scheme	App-based reusable coffee cup service, subscribe, scan qr code on cup, can use for takeout coffee from retail, return at any drop-off location. Has 24/7 street side return kiosks. Claims to cost about the same as disposables. Website not very clear, had to get more information from press.	Launched in Berkeley 2019	11	Started in Boulder, moved to Berkeley	Consumers provide \$15 deposit, unclear how much it costs vendor	Vendors, consumers	active	https://vesselworks.org/	local
Waitrose	food serviceware to-go, coffee cups	consumer	Grocery store banned single use coffee cups, and encourage customers to bring their own containers to meat and fish counters (which could be a health code violation in some areas). Has a very green supply chain.	Since 2018	~hundreds	Britain	N/A	Consumers	active	https://www.waitrose.com/home/inspiration/about_waitrose/the_waitrose_way/packaging.html	national



FOOD

No reusable cups: Starbucks will temporarily pause the use of personal cups over coronavirus fears

Kelly Tyko USA TODAY

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Starbucks is temporarily restricting the use of reusable, personal mugs in stores because of the coronavirus, the company announced Wednesday.

In an open letter posted on the company's website, executive Vice President Rossann Williams wrote that the company has "taken a series of precautionary steps in response to this emerging public health impact."

In January, Starbucks closed half of its China stores because of the outbreak, though many have since reopened, officials have said.

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"Our focus remains on two key priorities: Caring for the health and well-being of our partners and customers and playing a constructive role in supporting local health officials and government leaders as they work to contain the virus," Williams said in Wednesday's letter.

In her letter, Williams outlined five of the company's steps, which include "increased cleaning and sanitizing for all company-operated stores to help prevent the spread of all germs" and restricting "all business-related air travel, domestic and international through March 31."

Can't find hand sanitizers?: Amid coronavirus fears, here's how to make it at home with vodka or rubbing alcohol

Price gouge much?: Purell for \$149, face masks for \$20: Coronavirus price hikes are making everyone mad

The company also is "pausing the use of personal cups and 'for here' ware in our store," Williams said, noting they will still honor "the 10-cent discount for anyone who brings in a personal cup or asks for 'for here' ware."

As part of the steps, Starbucks converted its annual shareholders meeting in hometown Seattle to a virtual-only event due to concerns about the virus. The meeting will be March 18, as originally planned.

The partylike event that attracted 4,000 shareholders last year was supposed to be held at a theater in downtown Seattle. A virus cluster has emerged in Washington state, however, with 10 reported deaths.

"We will continue to stay close to our partners and local health officials, and we are optimistic this will be a temporary situation," Williams said.

Contributing: Associated Press