



Last Chance Mercantile Communications Update

November 10, 2020 – Due to the Last Chance Mercantile’s lengthy temporary closure and ongoing feedback the District receives on the issue, staff made the decision to update the public about the reopening process for greater transparency. An “Update on Last Chance Mercantile Reopening Plan” notice was posted to the MRWMD homepage, as well as Last Chance Mercantile’s Facebook and Instagram pages on October 26. Communications and Public Education staff monitored social media comments and responded as appropriate. The update sparked interest from the Monterey Herald, who wrote a front-page story on November 6. Attached are copies of the website update, Facebook comments, and Monterey Herald article.

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Update on Last Chance Mercantile Reopening Plan

LAST CHANCE MERCANTILE

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Update on Last Chance Mercantile Reopening Plan

Posted on October 26, 2020 by Angela

Updated 10-26-2020

The Last Chance Mercantile (LCM) closed in March in response to COVID-19. Due to budgetary and safety constraints, LCM has remained closed and store employees were laid-off, while the District reassesses the best path forward. You can [read the full press release](#) explaining the economic necessity of the closure.

At the October 23rd meeting, Director of Communications Zoe Shoats provided the Board of Directors a verbal update on the LCM reopening plan. Members of the public were given an opportunity to provide comments, which they can do at every Board Meeting. [Scheduled meetings](#), [future agendas](#) and [past meetings](#) can be found on the [Governance page](#).

On October 8, the LCM task force met with former LCM employees for a second time. The LCM task force includes Tim Brownell, Director of Operations, Peter Skinner, Director of Finance and Administration, and Zoe Shoats, Director of Communications. At the meeting, the task force heard details from staff about their proposal to operate the store, including suggestions for increasing revenue and reducing operating costs.

The task force appreciated the research and thought that went into their proposal. Moving forward, the task force will be creating a District-operated store model based on many of their recommendations. The task force plans to share the draft model with the former staff for their input and recommendations.

Simultaneously, the task force has been working on securing interest from potential third-party operators. On Wednesday, October 21, the District released a [Request for Qualifications \(RFQ\)](#) for the operation of the LCM store. The RFQ was sent directly to local organizations whom District staff identified could be a good fit.

The RFQ was also [posted on the MRWMD homepage](#) under the bulletin board section, as well as industry message boards on the [Solid Waste Association of North America \(SWANA\)](#) and [Northern California Recycling Association \(NCRA\)](#) websites. Responses to the RFQ are due by November 30 at 1 p.m. Staff will evaluate all responses to the RFQ, finish analysis of a staff-run District-operated model, and bring all options to the Board for consideration at the January meeting.

District staff appreciates the public's continued support of the Last Chance Mercantile. We appreciate your understanding and look forward to reopening as soon as it is possible.

To publicly comment, you can [attend virtual Board Meetings](#). For questions related to the RFQ, please contact lcmrfq@mrwmd.org.

Available at: <https://www.mrwmd.org/2020/10/26/update-last-chance-mercantile-reopening-plan/>

Facebook Posts

 **Monterey Regional Waste Management District (MRWMD)** October 27 · 🌐

The Last Chance Mercantile (LCM) closed in March in response to COVID-19. Due to budgetary and safety constraints, LCM has remained closed while the District reassesses the best path forward. You can read an update on the status of LCM task force and an RFQ release for the operation of the store. <https://www.mrwmd.org/.../update-last-chance-mercantile-reop.../>




Update on
Last Chance Mercantile
Reopening Plan


329 People Reached 75 Engagements [Boost Post](#)

👍 9 3 Comments 1 Share


👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share 🌐

 **Irene Merrill** I'll be hoping you can open as before. At LCM I have found: my favorite patio chaise lounge, an office chair for home, an office chair for my office, and 8 chairs for our office conference room table, plus numerous small things like lamps. Fingers crossed!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · 1w 👍 2

 **Jaynie Thaler Moore** LCM is a wonderful store with great employees, & I look forward to returning one day. I just hope that doll is okay as she's been there a long time by herself now... 😊

[Haha](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · 1w 😂 1

 **Maria Medina** I hope if they open soon the laschan I love to go relax a lot

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · [See Original \(Spanish\)](#) · 1w 👍 1



Last Chance Mercantile

October 27 · 🌐

The Last Chance Mercantile (LCM) closed in March in response to COVID-19. Due to budgetary and safety constraints, LCM has remained closed while the District reassesses the best path forward. You can read an update on the status of LCM task force and an RFQ release for the operation of the store. <https://www.mrwmd.org/.../update-last-chance-mercantile-reop.../>



2,641

People Reached

796

Engagements

Boost Post

👍❤️😬 61

49 Comments 3 Shares

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share



All Comments ▾



Comment as Last Chance Mercantile



Lorin Hofmann-Lurz I am thankful for the newspaper article on November 5 and to see there is a possibility the site will be open. Residents have items that are not suitable for other donations sites. Bringing things to the last chance has prevented putting so much into a garbage can. Please find a suitable option soon and re-open.

Like · Reply · Message · 3d



Joshelyn Ramirez Glad to see this reopening and I hope former staff are rehired to continue staffing this!!! 🍷❤️



Susi Allen I would also like to see LCM open and the laid-off employees rehired. Have you looked into partnering with Gateway Center to give their clients work -- assisting the LCM employees? I used to see their work crews cleaning up the streets in Sand City whe... [See More](#)

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Author

Last Chance Mercantile Thank you for the information and idea Susi! I'm passing your comment on to the LCM task force to look into.

Like · Reply · Commented on by Angela Goebel [?] · 1w



Ethan Krolick A very noninformative update. It amazes me this place didn't make enough of a profit. Every time I'm there it's packed. Do much do they opened up a second parking lot. Let's not forget everything they sell is donated and still unable to yield a profit? ... [See More](#)

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Author

Last Chance Mercantile Hi Ethan, I'm tracking down some historical financial data of the store for you. It was referenced in our June Board Meeting when the budget was being discussed; last year the store generated \$1.2 million in revenue and there were \$1.7 million in operating expenses. This reflects how the store's prices have remained stable (and from other public feedback - very affordable) for the last decade, while our employee labor costs have been rising an average of six percent per year. I'll post a link showing the financial data for the store over the last 5-10 years soon. You'll see how the gap between revenue and operating expenses has been growing every year.

Like · Reply · Commented on by Angela Goebel [?] · 1w



Author

Last Chance Mercantile Here's an analysis of LCM historical financials.



Like · Reply · Commented on by Angela Goebel [?] · 1w





Broox Le The 6% per year employee costs increase is a problem because the surrounding productive industries (those which produce value-added good & services) have not been able to maintain 6% per year. We need to make it cost less to divert materials into reuse than to landfill them.

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Ethan Krolick Last Chance Mercantile Thank you for putting in the time and energy to clarify. I have always thought of the MERC as a charitable or non-profit for the community and it made sense ten years ago when I purchased something as-is because if it didn't wor... [See More](#)

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Author

Last Chance Mercantile Ethan Krolick Thank you Ethan. We recognize that it's a more complex ecosystem than it may seem at first glance, and we appreciate the opportunity to clarify. Hoping to see you again when the store reopens too!

Like · Reply · Commented on by Angela Goebel [?] · 1w · Edited



Sonia Cortez It would be great for it to open again. Bring back the original staff since they know the store so well and have built a great relationship with us the customer.

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Author

Last Chance Mercantile

Author

Last Chance Mercantile... [See More](#)



Like · Reply · Commented on by Angela Goebel [?] · 1w



Sonia Cortez Last Chance Mercantile Im happy to hear that your allowing and listening to their views and listening to what they have to say and offer. It's important to give an opportunity to those who have dedicated themselves to the store, specially during these times. It shows that the years they have put into the store isn't being overlooked and that they are being seen as more than just a former employee.....but in all hope the store opens soon and allows the community to enjoy shopping for treasures again. 😊

Like · Reply · Message · 1w





Jann Franklin Just get it back open SAFELY....We will promise to wear a mask and social distance or help you kick them out 😊

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Jessica Rubio Open back up with the same smiles!!! We love the people here!!! Many of these employees have been familiar faces for years!!! We miss you last chance!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Emily Tonkin This is a hugely valuable community resource for so many. Please reopen! We miss you!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Marlene Ross I miss my weekly visits there, always a friendly face working there. I've been a loyal costumer for many,many yrs. as many others have been. I know we all miss the excitement of the hunt. 🤔🤔🤔. Hopefully it will continue as a great place to continue treasure hunting on a budget. 🙌👍

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



James Peterson I'll be keeping up with the status of the reopening of LCM. At this point I must say I am not to impressed with one suggestion presented by the Task Force with their consideration of a third party operator. Why would you want or need to "privatize" th... See More

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Author

Last Chance Mercantile Thank you for your feedback to keep the store District-operated James. Your comment, along with the others posted here, will be shared with the Board. The task force is exploring all options for the reopening of the store because reuse is important to ... See More



Like · Reply · Commented on by Angela Goebel [?] · 1w · Edited



Jonna Deal Really miss going there. be glad when opens and hope same employees as they know store and always helpful .

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Jeanne Paynter It needs to be kept local, keep the employees who have been loyal.

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Jennifer Boom Please re-open with original staff. Love LCM and the staff made it the great place it was.

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Barbara McHale Bring back our beloved employees & LCM!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Monica Leonard The employees were a huge part of the magic at Last Chance. Why wouldn't you bring back the people that made it such a hit with the community?

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Ann McBride Why is LCM staying closed? There is no reason. Stores are open everywhere. OPEN LCM!!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Christy Grothe Thank you for looking into reopening we enjoyed being able to donate and buy at the store

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Audrey Mansfield Love that store! I bought a real coffin and a mermaid from the Edge Water!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Christille Baxter Garcia Audrey Mansfield I've been wanting to go so badly..hopefully soon!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Veronica Rodriguez Price please open great store great people!!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w · Edited



Mary Louise Kates I miss the bottle buy back and then shopping at LCM. There was always something to leave with. Bring them back! Bring them back! Bring them back!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Mike Holland Merc should sue sue and sue!!!!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w





Tamara Nankivel Ohhh i hope you are able to reopen

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Crystal Chavanne Open please with original staff!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Heidi Nunlist Sullivan Please re-open!

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Apryl VanOstrand Open, Open, Open

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Mai Velazquez Please reopen

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Cynthia Cindy Eulitz Missing y'all.

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Erica Askew Debi Askew-Verdin it looks like they are going to re-open.

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Coastal Mimz Mariss Erica Askew They better keep same staff. And if a third party management takes over I worry that they will turn into a personal goldmine and ruin what Last Chance was.



Colleen Lawson Petro i miss last chance

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Apryl VanOstrand Please 😊

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



Sheena Malolot yea please 🙌

Like · Reply · Message · 1w

BUSINESS

Last Chance Mercantile near Marina looking for a second chance



The Monterey Regional Waste Management District's board of directors has directed its staff to issue a request for qualifications seeking long-term partners qualified to operate the Last Chance Mercantile store which has been shuttered since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic and budgetary constraints. (James Herrera – Monterey Herald)

By [JAMES HERRERA](#) | jherrera@montereyherald.com | Monterey Herald

PUBLISHED: November 5, 2020 at 1:10 p.m. | UPDATED: November 6, 2020 at 3:44 p.m.

MARINA — The Last Chance Mercantile store at the Monterey Regional Waste Management District facility north of Marina may get a second chance now that it has a reopening plan, and the district has issued a [request for qualifications](#) in an effort to find an organization willing to partner in running it.

“Since the temporary closure of the Last Chance Mercantile was announced, district staff and the board of directors have remained committed to its reopening,” said Zoe Shoats, Monterey Regional Waste Management director of communications. “We have received a good amount of public support via email, social media and attendance at our board meetings.”

Shoats said many loyal customers are eager to see the popular store reopen.

The Last Chance Mercantile has been closed since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic and budgetary and safety constraints, but now the district's board of directors has directed its staff to

explore ways to reopen the Last Chance Mercantile as quickly as possible, though part of its operation, the California Refund Value Buy-Back program, will remain permanently closed.

“We would like to see the Last Chance Mercantile reopen as soon as possible in 2021, but a date cannot yet to be determined,” said Shoats. “We expect the board to review submittals to the (request for qualifications), as well as a district-operated model, at their January meeting. Once the board selects a model or models, we will look to solidify an agreement with the selected operator or former employees before the store can reopen. An opening date will be determined through that process.”

In early October, the Last Chance Mercantile task force met with former employees of the mercantile for a second time who have proposed operating the store, suggested ways to increase revenue and reduce operating costs.

The task force includes Tim Brownell, Monterey Regional Waste Management District director of operations, Peter Skinner, director of finance and administration, and Shoats.

Monterey Regional Waste Management District made cuts to its fiscal year 2020-2021 budget by offering early retirement packages to eligible employees, laying off non-essential positions and having senior and management staff agree to pay cuts and wage increase freezes.

Now the district is reassessing the best path forward.

The request for qualifications is designed to gauge if there is a non-district entity that would be interested, qualified and possesses a viable plan to operate the mercantile in a way that meets the Waste Management District’s mission of “turning waste into resources” in a financially sustainable way.

“If using a third-party operator is determined to be the best option, we would look for an organization that will be a stable, long-term partner to ensure the store’s success,” said Shoats.

The Last Chance Mercantile was created in 1991 by the district as a monthly flea market and auction and by 1994 grew to be open two days every week, In 1996 it was moved to its current location, an 8,000-square-foot building with a paved 2-acre yard. The mercantile sold numerous reusable items, construction and landscape materials, and many other saleable materials. The store operated five days a week, with a staff of 15 the past few years. In addition to retail activities, the mercantile staff processed and packaged electronic waste, operated the California Refund Value Buy-Back program and sold landscape products. But the cost of operations have increased and the business was running at a deficit the past few years.



Operating partners of the Last Chance Mercantile would be expected to handle and sell materials using the existing facility, yard and parking area to perform services. (James Herrera – Monterey Herald)

Once the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, affecting health and safety precautions while impacting the district’s budget, the mercantile had to close.

But now the district is seeking long-term partners qualified to operate the Last Chance Mercantile store and be expected to handle and sell material diverted by district staff from the active waste stream and accept donations from the general public and do so while conforming to COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

Partners will not be asked to handle electronic waste or operate a California Refund Value program.

The district will make the current Last Chance Mercantile facility available including the building, yard and parking area and will maintain the facilities in a safe and legally compliant working condition. The district will also make infrastructure improvements deemed necessary by district staff, in consultation with the partners, and it is open for discussion regarding use of other assets such as forklifts and other equipment in the delivery of services.

“Based on preliminary interest we expect that there will be multiple strong submittals to the (request for qualifications) combined with a district-operated model for the board to consider,” said Shoats.

Requests for qualifications will be evaluated based on certain criteria and submission requirements. The deadline for turning in requests for qualifications is Nov. 30 by 1 p.m.

Available at: <https://www.montereyherald.com/2020/11/05/last-chance-mercantile-near-marina-looking-for-a-second-chance/>

Prepared by Angela Goebel