



Susan Wengraf
Councilmember District 6

CONSENT CALENDAR
May 30, 2017

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmembers Susan Wengraf, Sophie Hahn, and Ben Bartlett
Subject: A Ban on the Use of Plastic Straws in Berkeley

RECOMMENDATION:

Refer to the Community Environmental Advisory Commission and the Zero Waste Commission to explore the creation of an ordinance to prohibit the use of plastic straws in bars, restaurants and coffee shops in the City of Berkeley. The commissions should reach out to business owners and store managers and other stakeholders to get their input on the possibility of providing compostable or reusable alternatives to plastic straws, like paper and bamboo.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Minimal

BACKGROUND:

Berkeley has been an environmental leader in prohibiting the use of single use plastic. In addition, in 2005, Berkeley passed a resolution setting a Zero Waste Goal of eliminating the materials that are sent to the landfill by the year 2020. Plastic straws are the poster child for needless single-use plastic, because they are, in most cases, not required to enjoy a beverage.

It is estimated that Americans discard 500 million plastic straws every day, littering our beaches and polluting our waterways and oceans. Straws have become ingrained in our culture, most drinks are served with them by default, even though they are unnecessary. Most straws are made from a petroleum-based plastic called polypropylene. Straws contain Bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical used to make plastic that mimics the activity of hormones such as estrogen, which can lead to health problems.

They represent yet another product that requires fossil fuel extraction putting undue strain on the environment.

Plastic straws might seem like a small factor in comparison to the enormous amounts of waste and plastic being dumped in our landfills every day, but it gives us an idea of how little things can actually make a big difference to our health and to our environment.

In addition, due to their small size, straws are often mistaken for food by animals and because of their cylindrical shape, they can cause suffocation and death to marine wildlife.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:

A ban on the use of plastic straws in Berkeley is a small step towards reaching our Zero Waste goals and improving our community's health and the health of our oceans and environment.

CONTACT:

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