



Dear City of Alameda Council Members:

Mayor Trish Herrera Spencer
Vice Mayor Malia Vella
Councilmember Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft
Councilmember Frank Matarrese
Councilmember Jim Oddie

Alameda is the “City of Homes and Beaches.” Our residents and businesses benefit from Alameda’s scenic beauty and bountiful wildlife. The City Council has embraced environmental stewardship through its adoption of local ordinances, including the ban of polystyrene food containers.

During this “season for caring for the earth” we are writing to encourage you to adopt a “straws on request” ordinance. Similar to “water on request” ordinances that many cities passed during the drought, the “straws on request” ordinance would prohibit restaurants, bars and other food vendors from automatically giving their customers single-use straws in every drink. Customers would still have the choice of requesting straws if needed.

- Straws are unnecessary, harmful to wildlife and are among the top ten littered items found on beach cleanups.
- Every year in Alameda we use nearly 45 million single-use plastic straws (based on the national average of 1.6 straws per person per day).
- The Alameda Unified School District has already eliminated straws in their food service operations and students have embraced drinking their milk right out of the carton.

By only providing straws on request, restaurants, bars and other food vendors can significantly reduce the disposal of single-use plastic. This simple action will reduce costs and can have incredibly positive, far-reaching effects on our planet.

Community Action for a Sustainable Alameda has partnered with students and families throughout our community to call upon the City Council to adopt a “straws on request” ordinance. A sample ordinance is attached. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of our environment.

Sincerely,

Ruth Abbe and Debi Ryan
Community Action for a Sustainable Alameda

DRAFT CITY OF ALAMEDA ORDINANCE NO. _____
New Series

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A SINGLE-USE DRINKING STRAW REDUCTION
PROGRAM

WHEREAS, approximately 500 million plastic drinking straws are used and discarded every day, and 175 billions straws are used a year in the United States alone.¹

WHEREAS, straws are often littered, or caught by the wind, and washed into storm drains that empty into streams, bays, and other waterways, and otherwise end up in ocean and beaches. Plastic straws are frequently cited as one of the top ten contributors to marine debris pollution.²

WHEREAS, plastic straws are the sixth most commonly found litter picked up along the California coast in the annual International Coastal Cleanup Day beach cleanups.³

WHEREAS, plastic does not biodegrade, but instead, photodegrades into smaller pieces of plastic causing pollution that is virtually impossible to remediate. When plastic enters our waterways, it adsorbs toxic chemicals such as DDT, PCBs, PAHs, and flame retardants found in our waterways.⁴

WHEREAS, marine life, including sea turtles, can be harmed by ingesting plastic straws and broken down plastic polluting our ocean and waterways.⁵

WHEREAS, as toxins from marine plastic pollution make their way up the food chain, they pose a dangerous threat to humans and wildlife who consume them, and can lead to health problems including birth defects, cancer, and learning and growth deficits in children. Many plastics contain chemicals that leach out, especially when exposed to weathering, heat, or UV light.⁶

¹ See www.thelastplasticstraw.org, and <http://ecocycle.org/bestrawfree/faqs>

² See <https://www3.epa.gov/region9/marine-debris/pdf/marine-debris-toolkit-epar9-2015.pdf>, and http://act.oceanconservancy.org/pdf/A_Rising_Tide_full_lowres.pdf, at p. 8.

³ See <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/extinct.html>

⁴ See http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/Gen_Plastic-hi_9-20-11_0.pdf

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See New York State Attorney General, at 4; citing Mason, S., unpublished data, (State University of New York at Fredonia) Alliance for the Great Lakes public presentation April 29, 2014, available at https://ag.ny.gov/pdfs/Microbeads_Report_5_14_14.pdf

BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Alameda:

Section 1. General Provisions

The City of Alameda finds and declares all of the following:

- a. The purpose of this ordinance is to reduce the number of single-use drinking straws currently used in the City of Alameda.
- b. Single-use drinking straws are not recyclable and are buried in the landfill.
- c. The purpose of this ordinance is to protect the environment from the negative environmental impacts of single-use drinking straws.
- d. The purposed of this ordinance is to give restaurant, bar and food vendor customers a choice to either use or not use single-use drinking straws. This ordinance would eliminate the practice of automatically giving a restaurant, bar or food vendor customer a single-use drinking straw with every drink.

Section 2. Restaurant and Bar Responsibility

- a. On and after _____, 2017, a restaurant, bar or food vendor operating with the City of Alameda that is serving a drink to a customer may not provide a single-use drinking straw to its customer except on specific request. A restaurant, bar or food vendor may have single-use drinking straws available for use by customers at locations within the restaurant, bar or food vendor establishment.

Section 3. Enforcement

- a. The Public Works Director or his/her designee will have primary responsibility for enforcement of this Article. The Public Works Director or his/her designee is authorized to promulgate regulations and to take any and all other actions reasonable and necessary to enforce this Article, including, but not limited to, entering the premises of any restaurant bar or food vendor during regular business hours to verify compliance.
- b. Anyone violating or failing to comply with any of the requirements of this Article will be subject to an administrative citation pursuant to Section 1.7 et seq. of the Alameda Municipal Code.
- c. The City Attorney may seek legal, injunctive, or other equitable relief to enforce this Article.

Section 4. Violations - Penalties

- a. Enforcement of the provisions of this Article shall be pursuant to the provisions adopted for the imposition of administrative citations and the hearing procedures related to those citations adopted under Section 1-7 et seq. of the Alameda Municipal Code.

Presiding Officer of the Council

Attest:

Lara Weisiger, City Clerk

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Ordinance was duly and regularly adopted and passed by Council of the City of Alameda in regular meeting assembled on the __ day of _____ 2017 by the following vote to wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the official seal of said City this __ day of _____ 2017.

Lara Weisiger, City Clerk
City of Alameda