

## Politics

# City to research potential ban on plastic bags, Styrofoam

By Jeremy Oberstein

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BURBANK — Proponents of banning plastic bags and Styrofoam in Burbank found an ally Tuesday, as the City Council asked staff members to move forward with a plan detailing ways to eliminate the environmental irritants.

The plan, brought forward by Recycling Coordinator Kreigh Hampel, includes further educational outreach to businesses and a promise to support future state legislation — should any be enacted in Sacramento next year.

“We’re not talking about a ban tonight, just education,” Hampel said at the meeting.

While the proposal found unanimous support on the dais Tuesday, future consideration of an outright ban may not be as popular.

Vice-Mayor Gary Bric, who runs a steakhouse in Burbank, is wary of any impingement on business owners. Councilman David Gordon said that a potential ban might be an unjust slight in today’s harsh economic climate.

“I really am very concerned about the impact to our economy,” he said. “Anything that could harm businesses I will not support.”

Still, both supported the plan Tuesday and Bric said he might support a future ban on plastic bags and expanded polystyrene — known more colloquially by the commercial name Styrofoam — if it is evenly implemented.

“I just don’t want you to only go after the food-service industry,” he said.

Such equalization could be the result if blanket state legislation is enacted in Sacramento that would be law for all Californians, officials said.

Legislation to ban plastic bags and curtail the use of Styrofoam, however, stalled in both state houses during the 2007-08 term, though Hampel said that the Assembly or Senate could take up the issue next term.

Still, proposed bans coming down from Sacramento might not have as great an impact than bans individual cities, such as Burbank, might enact — which frustrated Mayor Dave Golonski.

“We went from considering a ban, to now supporting state legislation,” he said. “We’re kind of on the other side of the pendulum. I think we should be more aggressive on both Styrofoam and plastic carry out bags.”

With or without legislative help, cities and companies throughout the California have already moved forward with laws and regulations they hope will curtail the use of plastic bags.

Los Angeles voted to start its ban on plastic bags in 2010 and home furnishings retailer IKEA, which used to charge a small fee for customers wishing to use plastic bags, now uses only reusable bags.

Burbank businesses are also jumping on the green bandwagon, Hampel said.

“We’ve had a lot of positive responses, and we are looking for more of that to come,” he said. “This is moving forward regardless of the action taken here tonight. I’ve never seen anything like this.”

The drive to rid Burbank of plastic bags and Styrofoam, which environmentalists say clog landfills and take decades to decompose, is part of the city’s march toward sustainability.

On Jan. 22, the council adopted a far-reaching Sustainability Action Plan that called for greater energy conservation, waste reduction and more efficient transportation.

Part of that plan is the Zero Waste Policy the council adopted June 10 in which officials hope to reduce or eliminate all waste in the city by 2040.

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