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Santa Monica a step closer to banning plastic bags

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Santa Monica will likely see fewer plastic bags floating around its streets and beaches soon. Last night, the Santa Monica City Council voted to draft an ordinance banning one-use plastic and biodegradable plastic-like bags in city businesses.

All retail locations in Santa Monica, regardless of type or size, will have to go plastic bag free and offer reusable bags for sale instead. The ban would apply only to the plastic bags given out at point-of-sale, not the flimsier bags found in the produce or bulk sections of supermarkets. Paper bags -- which the staff pointed out is not a significant source of marine pollution -- will still be allowed -- but the city council asked its staff to come back with recommendations on charging a fee on these bags.

The plastic bag ban had more or less unanimous support from both the members of the City Council and the community members who spoke at the meeting. Many spoke about marine pollution caused by plastic bags -- from getting tangled in them while surfing to seeing the eyesore crated by them on the beaches.

In contrast to the plastic bag ban, the paper bag tax raised a number of questions and concerns including outright opposition from Council member Robert Holbrook, who said "I just think they out to be free." Some felt that the paper bag tax should not be charged for food take-out, fast food places, or grocery deliveries -- businesses where reusable bags are not an easy solution. In addition, questions remained as to what the minimum charge per paper bag would be, and where the money would go. Staff recommendations regarding those questions -- as well as a drafted ordinance for a plastic bag ban -- will come back to the City Council. Once the plastic ban is drafted and passed, businesses will likely have at least a 6-month transition period before the ordinance is allowed to take effect.

Santa Monica's anti-plastic bag ordinance will be much stricter than the one passed by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors last month, which called for a voluntary effort. You can watch the City Council proceedings [here](#), or read the staff recommendations for the ordinance [here](#).

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