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# Malibu's Community Forum and Marketplace



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## Malibu Surfside News

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### MALIBU SURFSIDE NEWS

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### City Council Bans Plastic Bags within Local Boundaries

• Coalition of Young People and Environmentalists Issue Call for Swift Action

BY BILL KOENEKER

#### City of Malibu



#### Malibu Chamber of Commerce



#### Malibu Schools



#### Malibu Surfing Report



#### Malibu Road Info



#### Ficticious Business Name

Urged on by high profile environmentalists and local youngsters, the Malibu City Council unanimously approved the first reading of an ordinance banning plastic shopping bags.

Kelly Meyer, who was followed by the students from the Boys and Girls Club calling it green teens, talked about the global plastic problems, while Sarah Abramson, the director of resources at Heal the Bay told the council about the impacts of plastic shopping bags on the environment.

Last October, in what many consider his first campaign appearance, then Planning Commissioner Sibert, now city council member, had urged the council to explore banning the use of paper plastic and noncompostable bags in Malibu.

Long before that, Mayor Pamela Conley Ulich had urged a ban on the plastic shopping bags. The council was considering a ban on Styrofoam take-out products. At that time, a majority indicated they were not ready to take on both battles.

A city staff report prepared by Jennifer Voccola, the city's environmental program coordinator, said the plastic shopping bags "have been found to significantly contribute to litter and have negative impacts on the environment."

Due to their lightweight and inflatable characteristics they can become windblown foulants of the ocean and storm drain system," she said.

"Plastic bags pose a particular problem for wildlife, especially bird and aquatic life that mistake them for food and as a result—starving—or suffocate in the bag. Plastic bags are also known to harm plants," she added. "Plastics are a scourge on our environment."

The Malibu students talked about how much plastic is now in the environment and how long it takes to decompose.

Meyer said, "We know a lot of you are on board. Plastic is a huge problem. Join us in banning plastic bags," she added.

A debate ensued about what to do about paper bags and how just banning plastic bags impacts the immediate environment, but ultimately create landfill problems because paper generates more waste.

Mark Gold, the executive director of Heal the Bay, told council members no one in the United States has yet, but Santa Monica is looking into charging a fee for paper bags. "If we move everybody to paper, we are trading one problem for another," he said.

However, other council members did not want to take that action after Conley Ulich made the council direct staff to study a fee for paper bags. Council members balked, saying it would take too much staff for other priority matters.

There were some representatives from the plastics industry urging the council to not take this time. Echoing somewhat the sentiments of Gold, they argued that the ban would do little to solve the solid waste problem and in the long run could exacerbate it.

Council members were told the ban would not go into complete effect for a year to allow business owners to make the transition.