**Styrofoam Ban Set in Motion, Will Include Public Input Before Becoming Law**

**Long Beach Post. By** [**JASON RUIZ**](http://lbpost.com/jason) **DECEMBER 21 2016**

Long Beach’s ban on expanded polystyrene (styrofoam) will have to wait a little longer, after the city council voted last night to allow for more time to consult with businesses and other stakeholders on what that ban could potentially look like.

If adopted, the ban would halt the sales of styrofoam products and the distribution of disposable food service containers made out of Styrofoam. The ban would include a one-year phase-in element and include hardship waivers for those businesses that can provide proof that switching to an alternative would be too costly.

The item was brought to the council by First District Councilwoman Lena Gonzalez, who held a rally outside city hall prior to the meeting to drum up support for a #FoamFree Long Beach. She said expanded polystyrene represented one of the biggest issues to the city’s beaches and streets in terms of pollution and said that more eco-friendly alternatives appeared to be affordable for those businesses that could be impacted by the ban.

“I know there might be a cost impact but relative to what you’re seeing here you’re seeing the cost differential is very low,” Gonzalez said. “In some cases the cost differentials are cost-neutral and in some cases they are [a] one cent cost difference.”

The foam is not biodegradable, and while technically considered a recyclable material, it rarely finds a second life as a new material because of the high costs associated with cleaning and harvesting it once it’s been thrown out. If Long Beach were to indeed enact a ban, completing a process that was started by this council over a decade ago, it could join dozens of other cities in the state that have already taken steps to curb their styrofoam problem.

**Katie Allen, the executive director at Algalita Marine Research and Education**, a leader in the fight to keep plastics out of the world’s oceans, said its recent survey of the Long Beach Peninsula yielded over 2,100 pieces of the substance in just ten liters of sand. She said the foam often breaks down into smaller pieces that make it easier to enter the food system and harder for volunteers to remove from beaches. Banning the substance was the second most important action item in the group’s survey.

“We’re literally changing the composition of our ocean and our beaches,” Allen said. “These microplastics soak up toxins and may be entering our local food chains. They become bite-sized morsels for the fish, turtles and other animals living in our ecosystem. Beyond that, the individuals in our communities feed their families fish collected from this highly-polluted area.”

Plastic in the ocean is a growing worldwide issue. At the beginning of [2016 the World Economic Forum released a study](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/01/20/by-2050-there-will-be-more-plastic-than-fish-in-the-worlds-oceans-study-says/?utm_term=.761e0339d2ab) that predicted that by the year 2050 there would be more pounds of plastic in the world’s oceans than pounds of fish. The study also estimated that nearly all of the world’s seabirds have ingested plastic at some point in their lifetimes.

A large group of supporters filled the council chambers and lined up to plead with the city council to enact a ban with some citing the potential health risks of the substance—the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists it as a possible human carcinogen that is capable of leaching into food—and one man stating that the incoming White House administration has now placed environmental protection at the feet of local representatives. “Given the political environment in Washington, and given the fact that we have someone who has proposed a climate change denier who may be the head of the EPA, we have to look to you all more than ever to kind of lead by example,” said Robert Nothoff, the director of Don’t Waste Long Beach, a local environmental coalition