



Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Councilmember Johnny Khamis
District 10

SUBJECT: PRIORITY-SETTING NOMINATION: DATE: 04/26/18
BEVERAGE STRAWS UPON REQUEST
ORDINANCE

Approved

Date

RECOMMENDATION

I nominate for consideration at the next City Council priority-setting session the development of a "beverage straws upon request ordinance" including, but not limited to:

1. Requiring vendors such as restaurants, bars, and cafes to provide customers with a single-use beverage straw only when a straw is requested;
2. Promoting the act of going straw-less or the use of alternative, re-usable straw materials, e.g.) glass, steel, silicone, etc.
3. Providing an exemption for drive-thru food orders

BACKGROUND

San José is the center of innovation and the Capital of Silicon Valley. Given how we are the heart of the Bay Area and leaders in innovation, we should also be leading the movement to reduce the amount of plastics that enter our landfills, waterways, and beaches or end up alongside our streets and highways, by implementing a "straws upon request" ordinance. This one, small policy change can have a big, positive impact on our environment and it also aligns well with our Green Vision goals and Climate Smart San José plans.

ANALYSIS

According to the Ocean Conservancy non-profit environmental advocacy group, straws are one of the most common pieces of trash that are picked up near the ocean. In 2016, straws placed sixth in a ranking of the most frequently abated trash items near beaches in the United States, and the number of straws abated has been rising each year. The Ocean Conservancy has also provided a rough estimate of 93,000 to 236,000 tons of plastic in the oceans at any given time, and each year, eight (8) million more tons of plastics enter the oceans. This waste affects animals at every level of the food chain, with evidence showing small micro-plastics are ingested by marine life and small mammals. These micro-plastics become more concentrated higher in the food chain and are suspected to cause health problems in these living creatures. Now is the time to take a small step toward stemming the tide of plastic pollution before the problem grows even worse.