



## Agenda Item Summary

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**File ID:** 19-0445

**DEPT-5**

**Meeting Date:** 4/23/2019

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**PLACEMENT:** Departmental

**TITLE:**

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE VOLUNTARY REDUCTION OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC STRAWS AND POLYSTYRENE AND THE OVERALL REDUCTION OF PLASTICS IN MARTIN COUNTY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Pursuant to Board of County Commission direction, staff has drafted a Resolution supporting voluntary reduction of single-use plastic straws, polystyrene and plastic use in general to preserve, protect and enhance local Florida waterways and prevent plastic pollution from entering the marine environment. An outreach program to educate the public, K-12 students and businesses will be implemented in collaboration with local and regional partners to provide information on plastic pollution harm and to encourage and support alternative practices and use of marine friendly products.

**DEPARTMENT:** Utilities and Solid Waste

**PREPARED BY:** **Name:** Anne Murray  
**Title:** Hydrogeologist / Water Resources Coordinator

**REQUESTED BY:** Sam Amerson, P.E., Utilities & Solid Waste Director

**PRESET:**

**PROCEDURES:** None

**BACKGROUND/RELATED STRATEGIC GOAL:**

At present, global plastic production is equivalent to hundreds of millions of tons per year and is predicted to double within the next 10 years. Less than one fifth of all plastic is recycled. Approximately 40 percent of all plastic produced is in single use disposable plastics. These plastics include non-biodegradable beverage bottles, plastic bags, packaging, food containers and plastic straws. Each year an estimated 10 million tons of plastic enters the ocean mostly from land. This plastic waste stream joins the approximately 150 million tons of debris that are caught up in the world's ocean currents forming massive collections of marine trash. Eventually, as the plastic is exposed to the elements, it breaks down in to smaller pieces that are consumed by marine life in place of food causing starvation and death. Plastic waste can sicken or kill coral reefs by blocking sunlight from reaching coral or by abrading the coral and introducing pathogens and infection. We now know that microplastic fibers have contaminated virtually all the world's water and the health implications of consumption are not yet fully understood.

Plastic pollution that collects locally on the beaches, shorelines and waterways impacts the health and aesthetic beauty of our environment. Litter is costly to clean up and if left unchecked has impacts to recreation, tourism and to the economy. It is recognized that there are a number of local businesses, organizations and individuals that are taking affirmative action to reduce and eliminate use of single-use plastics. It is recognized that a collaborative effort is needed to preserve, protect and enhance coastal waters and to further support their environmental, ecological and socioeconomic value.

Accordingly, staff has drafted a Resolution with the purpose and intent to support voluntary single use plastic reduction within the boundaries of Martin County.

#### Proposed Single-Use Plastic Reduction Strategies

- a) Encourage a plastic-free, polystyrene-free Martin County. Focus initial efforts on plastic straws as “gateway plastic” to encourage reduced use of other single-use plastics and plastics in general
- b) Partner with City of Stuart and other governments and stakeholders in Martin County to collaborate on and extend reach of countywide plastics reduction campaign
- c) Develop an education outreach campaign focused on restaurants, schools and special events supported by tourism, utilities and solid waste, public works (coastal) and school board
- d) Develop metrics to measure success of plastic reduction program
- e) Support state legislature that seeks to repeal current state laws that preempt local government regulation of plastic bags and containers and local government regulation of the use and sale of polystyrene products

If adopted, Martin County joins a number of other cities and counties in Florida by approving a resolution supporting reduction and ultimately elimination of single-use plastic straw, polystyrene and plastics in general.

#### **ISSUES:**

Plastic straws and polystyrene products are not compostable or biodegradable, but instead photodegrade into smaller pieces which are then ingested by terrestrial and marine life and can eventually make its way into the human food chain and water supply generating a serious threat to our natural environment, marine and wildlife and to human health.

#### **LEGAL SUFFICIENCY REVIEW:**

To the extent this item contains legal issues; it has been reviewed for legal sufficiency, though it is mostly a matter of Board policy.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Move that the Board approve the proposed Resolution to support the voluntary reduction and ultimately elimination of single-use plastic straws and polystyrene and the overall reduction in plastics by businesses, residents and visitors.

## **ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Move that the Board provide direction to staff for revisions to the proposed Resolution.

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

None

## **ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

None

## **DOCUMENT(S) REQUIRING ACTION:**

- ☐ Budget Transfer / Amendment   ☐ Chair Letter   ☐ Contract / Agreement  
☐ Grant / Application   ☐ Notice   ☐ Ordinance   ☒ Resolution  
☐ Other:

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