

# **CORRESPONDENCE**



May 4, 2016

Terry Tornek, Mayor and Pasadena City Council  
City of Pasadena  
100 North Garfield Avenue  
Pasadena, CA 91109

Dear Mayor Tornek and Council Members,

The Pasadena Chamber of Commerce is deeply concerned with the financial impacts the proposed polystyrene ban would have on our small and independent food service businesses. On top of the recent increases to minimum wage in Pasadena and California, the addition of costs, even in the \$3000 to \$5000 per year range will have a dramatic impact on the financial well-being of many of the small, family owned and operated restaurants and catering services in Pasadena.

During a small-business roundtable the Chamber hosted prior to the Municipal Services Committee meeting, Mayor Terry Tornek and Council Member Andy Wilson heard directly from local restaurateurs who said that increasing costs pose a huge threat to their livelihoods. Whether it's the higher costs of providing health care for employees, upcoming increases in the minimum wage or price hikes for food, water and electricity, they're increasingly feeling pressure.

That's part of the reason why they continue to use foam foodservice items – they're effective and affordable. Customers won't burn their hands when they grab a morning coffee. Customers' to-go lunches are still hot when they get back to the office and sauces, soups and other liquids don't soak through the container.

Alternative products, on the other hand, are less effective than foam, yet they cost up to three times more. Anytime anyone is buying in bulk – whether it's a homeless shelter, hospital, restaurant or convenience store – even small increases in costs can really harm a bottom line. As an example, the Pasadena Unified School District said its costs increased by \$100,000 after switching from foam. These increases can have ripple effects, too: When costs go up for business owners, prices likely will go up for customers and hours could go down for employees.

Worse still, foam alternatives cause even more waste when you consider the java jackets and extra cups needed to protect customers' hands from hot drinks or the extra heavy duty to-go containers required to prevent food from leaking. That's likely why San Francisco saw an increase in paper cup litter after foam was banned there.

We all want to keep Pasadena clean and beautiful. Unfortunately, this proposal won't achieve that goal because it simply substitutes one single-use product for another single-use product, and it will harm our city's economic foundation, our small, locally owned businesses.

While your staff and recycling contractor bemoan the inefficiency and cost of recycling polystyrene, I believe the contract requires the recycling of polystyrene, whether it is cost-effective or not for the

contractor. The City and its taxpayers are subsidizing the recycling of materials in Pasadena, including polystyrene and other plastics. If the City of Pasadena is paying for a service, that service should be provided. We would all like to see every provision of the recycling contract enforced. That is what we are paying for, after all.

There is so much more the City of Pasadena could be devoting staff time and money to that could have a real and positive impact on our environment. The Pasadena Chamber of Commerce could be very supportive of measures to prevent all types of litter from entering our storm drains. We would happily support incentives to reduce water use among our small businesses through conservation and installation of fixtures that use less water. We would strongly support initiatives to incentivize installation of solar power panels on flat-topped commercial buildings and parking lots to reduce dependence on fossil fuel-generated power. We support encouraging recycling of plastic water bottles, probably the single most littered item (after cigarette butts). Providing locking recycling cans for every household to reduce theft of recyclables would also ensure more potentially recyclable material does not reach the landfill. (Often, the pilferers drop unwanted material in the street or place it in the regular trash can where it ends up in the landfill.) All of these could be more effective at enhancing our environment than a polystyrene ban, and none would impose an unfair financial burden on your local small businesses.

Our concerns reflect the added financial burden banning polystyrene would place on our small, locally-owned restaurants who are faced with yet another added cost to do business in Pasadena (along with the negligible impact banning polystyrene would have on our environment).

Thank you for your service to Pasadena.



Paul Little  
President and Chief Executive Officer

Cc: S. Mermell, M. Jomsky