

Plastic bags in South Tahoe OK, polystyrene may not be

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is on course to create a massive education campaign about why saying no to plastic bags is the right thing to do and why using a reusable canvas bag is the best option.

This comes at the direction of the city's Sustainability Commission, which met Wednesday afternoon. The commission called for a special meeting for March 17 at 4pm at Lake Tahoe Airport to hammer out the specifics of the campaign.



Containers like this may one day be banned in South Tahoe.

At the commission's February meeting, a full house weighed-in on the good and bad of banning plastic bags. At this time the commission is not seeking a ban.

Reasons the commission is against a ban are because the state will not allow a fee to be imposed on businesses using plastic bags and several jurisdictions have been sued because of their respective bans.

More than public education, it should be a public

campaign," Commissioner Claire Fortier said. "We need to have goals."

All of the commissioners concurred.

South Tahoe High School teacher Jamie Greenough was with a handful of her students at the meeting. Though no students chose to speak, Greenough offered to help however her classes can when it comes to education about using reusable bags.

The commission welcomed the support and will be working with the students and teacher.

Also at the March 3 meeting, the seven-member panel agreed to recommend to the City Council to ban the use of polystyrene throughout the city within a year. The council will likely take this up in May. It has ultimate authority over saying yes or no to ordinances.

The American Chemistry website says, "Polystyrene is found in your home, office, local grocery and in the cafeteria. It comes in many shapes and forms, from foam egg cartons and meat trays, to soup bowls and salad boxes, from coffee cups and utensils to CD jewel boxes," and from produce trays to "peanuts" used in packing and the lightweight foam pieces that cushion new appliances and electronics."

The commission is more interested in eliminating to-go containers made from polystyrene than all of the items mentioned above. However, the commission did not address specifics in the motion.

The city attorney's office is tasked with bringing back to the commission language for the proposed ordinance before it goes to the council.

"I think polystyrene is easy. There are so many distribution routes in place," Chairwoman Kirstin Cattell said in regards to how businesses could replace the product they are now

using.

Commissioner Do Lee suggested the ban be phased in so the impact to small businesses would be less.

Another item the commission voted on was to further investigate joining a statewide coalition that is looking into having an environmental impact report done in regards to banning plastic bags.