

ORDINANCE NO. 04542  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF SAN MATEO,  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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**AN ORDINANCE ADDING CHAPTER 4.107, COMPRISING OF SECTIONS 4.107.010 THROUGH 4.107.080 TO TITLE 4 OF THE SAN MATEO COUNTY ORDINANCE CODE PROHIBITING FOOD VENDORS FROM USING POLYSTYRENE BASED DISPOSABLE FOOD SERVICE WARE**

The Board of Supervisors of the County of San Mateo, State of California,  
**ORDAINS** as follows

**SECTION 1.** Chapter 4.107, comprising of sections 4.107.010 through 4.107.080, is hereby added to Title 4 of the San Mateo County Ordinance Code and shall read as follows:

**Chapter 4.107 PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF POLYSTYRENE BASED DISPOSABLE FOOD SERVICE WARE BY FOOD VENDORS**

**4.107.010 Findings and purpose.**

The Board of Supervisors finds and determines that:

- (a) Polystyrene is a petroleum-based, lightweight plastic material commonly used as food service ware by retail food vendors operating in the County of San Mateo. Polystyrene, often referred to by the trademark Styrofoam, has also become a problematic environmental pollutant given its non-biodegradable, and nearly non-reusable nature.
- (b) Polystyrene-based, single-use food service ware constitutes a substantial portion of the litter within the County of San Mateo.
- (c) Effective ways to reduce the negative environmental impacts of disposable food service ware include reusing or recycling food service ware and using

compostable materials made from renewable resources such as paper, cardboard, corn starch, potato starch, and/or sugarcane.

- (d) This Board does, accordingly, find and declare that it should restrict the use by food vendors of polystyrene-based disposable food service ware.

#### **4.107.020 Definitions.**

For purposes of this chapter, the following terms have the following meanings:

- (a) "Disposable food service ware" means single-use disposable products used in the restaurant and food service industry for serving or transporting prepared, ready-to-consume food or beverages. This includes but is not limited to plates, cups, bowls, trays and hinged or lidded containers, also known as clamshells. This does not include straws, utensils, or cup lids nor does it include disposable packaging for unprepared foods.
- (b) "Food vendor" means any vendor, business, organization, entity, group or individual, including a licensed retail food establishment that provides prepared food at a retail level.
- (c) "Polystyrene-based" means and includes expanded polystyrene, which is a thermoplastic petrochemical material utilizing a styrene monomer and processed by any number of techniques including , but not limited to fusion of polymer spheres (expandable bead polystyrene), injection molding, form molding, and extrusion-blow molding (extruded foam polystyrene). The term "polystyrene" also includes polystyrene that has been expanded or blown using a gaseous blowing agent into a solid foam (expanded polystyrene (EPS)), and clear or solid polystyrene known as oriented polystyrene.
- (d) "Prepackaged food" means any properly labeled processed food, prepackaged to

prevent any direct human contact with the food product upon distribution from the manufacturer, and prepared at an approved source.

- (e) "Prepared food" means food or beverages, which are serviced, packaged, cooked, chopped, sliced, mixed, brewed, frozen, squeezed or otherwise prepared. Prepared food does not include eggs, fish, meat, poultry, and foods containing these raw animal foods requiring cooking by the consumer as recommended by the Food and Drug Administration.

#### **4.107.030 Prohibited use polystyrene-based disposable food service ware.**

No food vendor shall use polystyrene-based disposable food service ware when providing prepared food.

#### **4.107.040 Exemptions.**

- (a) Prepackaged food is exempt from the provisions of this chapter.
- (b) Polystyrene coolers and ice chests intended for reuse are exempt from the provisions of this chapter.
- (c) Food vendors at the San Francisco International Airport are exempt from the provisions of this chapter.

#### **4.107.050 Request For An Exemption.**

Any food vendor may seek an exemption from the requirements of this chapter upon demonstrating that strict application of the requirements would cause undue hardship.

- (a) An "undue hardship" shall be found in:
  - (1) Situations unique to the food vendor where a suitable alternative does not exist for a specific application; and/or
  - (2) Situations where no reasonably feasible available alternative exists to a

specific and necessary container prohibited by this chapter.

- (b) The application process for exemption shall be as follows:
  - (1) The food vendor seeking an exemption shall submit a written exemption request to the Environmental Health Division.
  - (2) A written exemption request shall include all information and documentation necessary for the Director of the Environmental Health Division to make a finding that imposition of this chapter would cause an undue hardship as defined in Section 4.107.050(a).
  - (3) The Director of the Environmental Health Division may require the applicant to provide additional information in order to make a determination regarding the exemption application.
  - (4) Exemption decisions are effective immediately and are final and not subject to appeal.
  - (5) The Director of the Environmental Health Division or his/her designee may grant an exemption for a period of up to one year upon a finding that the food vendor seeking the exemption has demonstrated that strict application of the specific requirement would cause undue hardship as defined in 4.107.050 (a).
- (c) If a food vendor granted an exemption wishes to have the exemption extended, it must re-apply for the exemption prior to the expiration of the one year exemption period and demonstrate continued undue hardship. Extensions may be granted for intervals not to exceed one year.

**4.107.060 Administrative fine.**

- (a) Grounds for Fine. A fine may be imposed upon findings made by the Director of the Environmental Health Division, or his or her designee, that any food vendor

has used polystyrene-based disposable food service ware in violation of this Chapter.

- (b) Amount of Fine. Upon findings made under subsection (a), the food vendor shall be subject to an administrative fine as follows:
  - (1) A fine not exceeding one hundred dollars (\$100) for a first violation;
  - (2) A fine not exceeding two hundred dollars (\$200) for a second violation;
  - (3) A fine not exceeding five hundred dollars (\$500) for the third and subsequent violations;
  - (4) Each day that a food vendor uses polystyrene-based disposable food service ware when providing prepared food shall constitute a separate violation.
- (c) Fine Procedures. Notice of the fine shall be served on the food vendor. The notice shall contain an advisement of the right to request a hearing before the Director of the Environmental Health Division or his or her designee contesting the imposition of the fine. The grounds for the contest shall be either that (1) the food vendor did not use polystyrene-based disposable food service ware when providing prepared food or (2) the food vendor would have been granted an exemption under 4.107.050 if the food vendor had applied for such exemption. Said hearing must be requested within ten days of the date appearing on the notice of the fine. The decision of the Director of the Environmental Health Division shall be based upon a finding that one of the above listed grounds for a contest have been met and shall be a final administrative order, with no administrative right of appeal.
- (d) Failure to Pay Fine. If said fine is not paid within 30 days from the date appearing on the notice of the fine or of the notice of determination of the Director of the Environmental Health Division or his or her designee after the hearing, the fine

shall be referred to a collection agency.

**4.107.070 Severability.**

If any provision of this chapter or the application of such provision to any person or in any circumstances shall be held invalid, the remainder of this chapter, or the application of such provision to person or in circumstances other than those as to which it is held invalid, shall not be affected thereby.

**4.107.080 Enforcement of this chapter when adopted.**

The Environmental Health Division is hereby directed to enforce Chapter 4.107 of Title 4 within an incorporated area of the County of San Mateo if the governing body of that incorporated area does each of the following:

- (a) Adopts, and makes part of its municipal code:
  - (1) Chapter 4.107 of Title 4 in its entirety by reference; or
  - (2) An ordinance that contains each of the provisions of Chapter 4.107 of Title 4;
- (b) Authorizes, by ordinance or resolution, the Environmental Health Division to enforce the municipal code adopted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, such authorization to include, without limitation, the authority to hold hearings and issue administrative fines within the incorporated area of the public entity.

**SECTION 2.** This Ordinance shall be effective as of July 1, 2011.

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