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**Reducing Single Use Plastics in County Facilities**

Plastic waste continues to be a serious problem in Los Angeles County, especially with the multiple disruptions to international recycling markets that have occurred over the past few years. This issue was highlighted in a report published by the UCLA Luskin Center, entitled “Plastic Waste in Los Angeles County”, which was produced in response to a 10/15/19 motion by the Board on “Limiting Single-Use Plastics in Los Angeles County Unincorporated Areas.” The report was developed through an extensive literature review as well as interviews with local waste haulers and Materials Recovery Facilities. Key takeaways from that report showed that plastic food service ware is rarely collected for recycling primarily due to size, potential food contamination, and undesirable materials.

This problem has grown during the COVID-19 pandemic, as restaurant and grocery deliveries have increased exponentially and the use of reusable beverage containers and grocery bags was discouraged or disallowed early on.

At the same time, the pandemic has also put a tremendous strain on businesses, particularly on small businesses and restaurants, due to closures or limitations on

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capacity. Although the UCLA report suggests that a transition to more sustainable food service ware materials or reusables is unlikely to represent a significant economic burden and may in fact be either cost neutral or result in savings in the long-term, the County believes this transition should be done in partnership with restaurants when they have the capacity to fully participate in conversations about these policies and determine how to implement any required changes affecting their individual businesses.

We are facing additional challenges related to the ways in which we manage organic waste, especially food waste. Of the 10.5 million tons of waste disposed Countywide in 2019, approximately 55% (5.8 million tons) was organic waste and of that, 27% (1.6 million tons) was food waste. Once in landfills, organic matter decomposes to carbon dioxide and, even more concerning, methane, which is a more potent climate pollutant than carbon dioxide. In 2018, methane from landfills accounted for 22% of California's overall methane emissions. In response to this problem, the State of California passed SB1383 which established ambitious goals to increase organic waste diversion from landfills and recover edible food, and placed mandates on counties throughout the State to achieve these goals.

There is a real opportunity for the County to demonstrate leadership in the waste management arena. Prior to COVID-19 closures and a transition to telework for many County employees, the County used many single-use items in everyday operations, including in County facilities with onsite food vending and during stakeholder convenings. In addition, SB1383 requires the County to adopt organic waste reduction measures within its own facilities in addition to the broader community-wide changes. Organic waste management, especially when it comes to food waste, also has a strong nexus with food service ware materials. A switch to readily

compostable food service ware can increase food waste diversion, since both the food service ware and food waste can be collected in the same container and sent for diversion.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Public Works, in coordination with the Chief Sustainability Office, and the Department of Public Health, to consult with relevant County departments and report back to the Board within 180 days with a draft Board Policy that achieves the following:

1. Eliminates the use of single use plastics in County facilities to the extent feasible, requires that any single-use items are compostable or highly recyclable, and encourages the use of reusables;
2. Establishes guidelines for County convenings to be zero waste events;
3. Establishes expectations for SB 1383 implementation at County Departments; and
4. Ensures that data is collected to characterize the effort for the County to manage organic waste and transition to more sustainable materials, especially data on costs.