

**ORANGE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**ACTION AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT**

**Meeting Date:** October 16, 2018

**Action Agenda  
Item No.** 4-d

---

**SUBJECT:** Reduce Single Use Plastics Month & Skip the Straw Month Proclamation

---

**DEPARTMENT:** Solid Waste Management

---

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

Proclamation

**INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Robert Williams, 919-968-2788

---

**PURPOSE:** To consider a proclamation declaring October 2018 as “Reduce Single Use Plastics Month” and declaring March 2019 as “Skip the Straw Month.”

**BACKGROUND:** In the spring of 2018, Commissioner Penny Rich petitioned that the BOCC consider implementing a skip the straw program. In reviewing the issue, the Solid Waste Advisory Group (SWAG), in addition to supporting the Skip the Straw program, proposed expanding on the program to encourage the reduction of all single use plastics and having the County and each Town during the month of October issue the proposed proclamation. Each Town is anticipating considering the proclamation during the month of October.

Hundreds of millions of tons of plastic are produced every year, most of which cannot be recycled. Petroleum based plastic is not recyclable and usually goes into a landfill where it is buried or it ends up in storm-water, lakes and eventually the oceans. While plastic will not biodegrade, it will break down into tiny particles after many years. In the course of breaking down, it releases toxic chemicals which make their way into the food and water supply.

The National Skip the Straw Day, founded in 2017, is held the fourth Friday in February, and there is a movement in the greater Triangle area and with coastal counties in North Carolina to declare March 2019 a state-wide Plastic Straw Free Month. By issuing the proclamation now declaring March as Skip the Straw Month, staff anticipates being able to call more attention to the issue and garner widespread community support.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** There is no financial impact associated with consideration of the proclamation.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPACT:** The following Orange County Social Justice Goal is applicable to this item:

- **GOAL: ESTABLISH SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE LAND-USE AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES**

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes and educational levels with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, policies, and decisions. Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies.

Orange County seeks to create, preserve, and protect a natural environment that includes clean water, clean air, wildlife, important natural lands, and sustainable energy for present and future generations.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):** The Manager recommends that the Board approve and authorize the Chair to sign the proclamation.

# ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

## PROCLAMATION

### OCTOBER 2018 – “REDUCE SINGLE USE PLASTICS MONTH” & MARCH 2019 – “SKIP THE STRAW MONTH”

**WHEREAS**, single-use plastics such as straws, cups, utensils, and take-out containers are not recyclable and must be landfilled; and

**WHEREAS**, single-use plastic bags are recyclable but still cause harm in the environment; and

**WHEREAS**, single-use plastics remain in the environment indefinitely, harming wildlife, impacting water quality, and diminishing the aesthetic character of the County’s outdoor environment; and

**WHEREAS**, plastics do not biodegrade in the environment, but instead break down into smaller micro-plastics; and

**WHEREAS**, single-use plastic pollution presents a danger to public health by increasing the pathogens and chemicals in animal tissue, waterways and lowering water quality, requiring significant resources to address; and

**WHEREAS**, Orange County and the Towns therein wish to recognize National Skip the Straw Month to encourage residents to give up single use plastic straws; and

**WHEREAS**, Orange County and the Towns therein wish to promote the reduction in the use of ALL single-use plastics by residents and businesses by encouraging reuse and durable alternatives, refusing single-use plastics when offered, and offering compostable or reusable alternatives; and

**WHEREAS**, Orange County and the Towns therein are known for and committed to social and technical innovation, environmental and waste reduction leadership;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, we, the Orange County Board of County Commissioners, do hereby declare October 2018 as “Reduce Single Use Plastics Month” and declare March 2019 as “Skip the Straw Month.”

This the 16<sup>th</sup> Day of October 2018.

---

Mark Dorosin, Chair  
Orange County Board of Commissioners