

# Polystyrene ban could be broader than SLT

By Kathryn Reed

The South Lake Tahoe City Council at its Feb. 6 meeting is expected to solidify its desires for a ban of polystyrene, also known as Styrofoam.

Four tiers are expected to be presented to the electors, who last fall asked for staff to bring back details about what such a ban might look like.

Members of the South Lake Tahoe Basin Waste Management Authority were given a preview of what the council will be presented. The idea is that perhaps a basinwide ban might be contemplated. This group's members are South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and Douglas County.

It was suggested the presentation be made to the Local Government Committee of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency when it meets in Stateline at the end of February.

The tiers to be considered by the city include:

- Ban polystyrene single-use containers used for take-out food.
- Ban retail sales of polystyrene, which would include items like foam coolers and food containers.
- Ban all products using polystyrene on goods packaged outside the city limits like egg containers and trays meat comes on.
- Ban all polystyrene products at special events.

The latter is already part of the special use permit, so it

would be included in any future ordinance or resolution the council comes up with.

Any combination of these ideas could be implemented.

Tracy Franklin, the city's communications guru, in her presentation on Jan. 19 said many restaurants are already using a biodegradable, sometimes compostable material for to-go containers. She has spoken with other eateries and explained how the price point is not much greater to make the transition.

More than 100 cities or counties in California already have some sort of ban on polystyrene. The material is bad for the environment and people's health, especially if they reheat the food in the container.

Franklin said in speaking with local retailers the response was that their corporate offices are already used to how Californians operate – meaning they will adapt if the city says certain goods can't be sold or used here.

She added that the Poultry Council is asking for a two-year grace period to work on coming up with a suitable alternative packaging material.

Officials with South Tahoe Refuse were at the Friday meeting. While they agreed polystyrene is not recyclable and does not breakdown, they want to make sure whatever is used next that there is a market for it.

Still, even if the "new" products can't be recycled, at least they will eventually breakdown at a landfill, something polystyrene will never do.