

Town looks to green cleaners

Written by Ken Borsuk, Staff Reporter
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Greenwich could be on the verge of finding a greener way to clean up after the introduction of a new policy requiring the use of more environmentally friendly cleaning and sanitizing products.

The policy, which is being considered by the Board of Selectmen, was put together by members of the Environmental Task Force. It requires that no cleaning product may be used inside a town building unless it has received the certification of Green Seal Certified or EcoLogo. This includes disinfectants, disinfecting cleaners, sanitizers and any antimicrobial products regulated by the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act.

If the new policy is implemented, any existing cleaning supplies would be used until empty and then replaced by the environmentally friendly products. Companies that have cleaning contracts with the town would also have to use the green products.

The state of Connecticut already has a similar policy in place for cleaning in all of its buildings.

Elizabeth Bittner, a task force member and co-chairwoman of its cleaning products committee, presented the resolution to the board at its Jan. 14 meeting.

Before developing the proposal, committee members spoke with the town's purchasing department and the various town departments, such as public works, parks and recreation and the Board of Education that use cleaning products, to solicit their ideas and feedback. Ms. Bittner said that everyone the committee met with "seemed receptive" to the idea of making the change and some have already started to consider the more environmentally safe products.

Michael Franco, a committee member and the medical director of the Intensive Care Unit at Greenwich Hospital, said he had spoken to Tony Cuomo, the hospital's director of hospitality services, about how it made the change to green cleaning products 12 years ago. Dr. Franco said he was told the transition was "very smooth" and that while it cost more initially to purchase the products, it saved money in the long run because there were less health-related absences from employees who were not able to tolerate the chemicals.

"He said that patient and employee satisfaction went up when they made the conversion," Dr. Franco said. "He and other hospital administrators feel it was a plus for the hospital because they were able to go green."

Dr. Franco said he hadn't done a full study on the benefits of going green, but he had no doubt certain cleaning products are "no good" for people with health issues such as asthma.

The selectmen offered some general support. No vote was taken. A public hearing will be held before a vote is taken.

In the resolution, it states that the green products do not cost more than the cleaning products currently used and may reduce the number of products used. Ms. Bittner said the task force will consult once more with the purchasing department to show the board a full comparison of what the town would pay for the green products versus what it uses now.

"We'll show you the differences between cost and manpower," Ms. Bittner pledged.

A vote is expected at the board's Feb. 26 meeting. The task force will also soon be bringing resolutions to the selectmen for recycling and for green housing.