

Another Choice

Flier Company Suggests Alternative to Proposed Flier Ban

“Without these fliers, they won’t be able to bring in the famous DJs, fashion shows or celebrities that draw so many people to South Beach.”



City officials are considering laws banning fliers despite the protests of some business owners and nightlife promoters who use them as marketing tools. File photo illustration by Mitchell Zachs/Magicalphotos.com

By Jason Jeffers

Other than crinkly green dollar bills, the only things that pass through more hands on South Beach are the ubiquitous nightclub fliers.

Often measuring four inches by six inches, with a glossy UV coating and plastered with bold type trumpeting a hot new party with a hot new DJ, they make their way from various print shops around Miami Beach, into the hands of party promoters and ultimately, into the hands of potential partiers.

But very often discarded fliers end up on the street as litter, much to the chagrin of residents, as well as city commissioners who have vowed to do something about it. On Wednesday, Dec. 6, they will take a final vote on an ordinance that could effectively make handbill distribution in Miami Beach illegal. And the mayor and commission will be met by representatives of the nightclub and flier industry who have come up with their own alternative legislation.

“When we first heard about the ordinance, we didn’t take it that seriously,” said Sean Saladino, director of operations at PK Graphics, a Miami Beach-based company and one of the largest flier printers in South Florida. “However, a lot of our clients — from promoters to small mom-and-pop businesses — started coming to us concerned that they could lose everything if this goes into effect.”

As such, PK Graphics and its president, Miguel Paredes, have put forth a proposal of their own, which calls for businesses to obtain a license to distribute fliers, the establishment of no-flier zones and a flier recycling program that would be funded by the money generated from distributor registration. The program calls for the placement of several specially designed, 95-gallon recycling receptacles throughout the city’s entertainment zone – roughly from First to 23rd streets between Washington and Collins

avenues, as well as Lincoln Road and Española Way. The receptacles would be emptied on a regular schedule by the Miami-based Southeastern Recycling Corp.

The city's own proposed ordinance, which came before the commission for first reading on Oct. 11, would prohibit promoters from disseminating commercial handbills — i.e., any flier, poster, banner or object that "conveys any information about any good or service provided by a business" in several key areas throughout the city, including major commercial corridors such as Ocean Drive, Collins Avenue, Lincoln Road and Washington Avenue. A \$500 fine would be applicable to each individual distributor, along with a series of \$500 fines for the business that advertised or created the flier. For instance, if there were three distributors involved in circulating a particular handbill, the business featured in it would be fined \$500 three times.

According to Saladino, fliers offer a more affordable and direct way of reaching potential customers. Many who utilize fliers to promote their business or party cannot afford the cost of buying an advertisement in most of the local publications, he said. Thus a ban on distributing fliers would not only have a negative impact on flier distributors and printers, but also on the city's income as well, reasons Saladino.

"I think the commissioners have to understand that the bars and nightclubs that pass out these fliers to let people know what they are doing are the lifeblood of this city," said Saladino. "Without being able to generate the interest in their events with these fliers, they won't be able to bring in the famous DJs, fashion shows or celebrities that draw so many people to South Beach. It would be devastating."

Calls to the city manager's office for a response to the proposal were not returned by press time, but the sponsor of the ordinance, Commissioner Saul Gross, said the issue isn't the actual distribution of the fliers, but the lack of responsibility on the part of those who pass them out.

"You can go out on Washington Avenue on any afternoon and see these promoters just throwing fliers on the pavement," said Gross. "This alternative proposal creates the wrong incentive: It calls for flier distributors to pay a tax for someone to clean up their mess. We're not interested in another level of bureaucracy or hiring more trash collectors."

According to city officials, over Memorial Day weekend, 80 tons of trash were collected, 75 of percent of which consisted of nightclub fliers.

"Everybody that I have spoken to in the industry is adamantly opposed to the trash," said Saladino, who argued that most of the more irresponsible flier distributors are out-of-town promoters doing one-time events. "Nobody wants to see it."

Gross said some changes could be made to the city's proposed ordinance before it comes back up for second reading, including more focus on the penalties for litter caused by fliering, and maybe even the elimination of the prohibition clause altogether.

"My thought is that the outright ban is not necessary," said Gross. "What we need is for whoever's handing out these fliers to be a lot more responsible about the mess they're causing."

Whether common ground can be found will be determined at the Dec. 6 commission meeting. Until then, those who rely on fliers to promote their parties and businesses wait with baited breath.

“The best solution would be for the city and the clubs to agree on some way to really cut back on the excessive littering; every night the city picks up so many pounds of trash,” says Keen One, DJ and promoter of weekly parties at the Catalina Hotel and Buck 15. “However, if they just decide that they’re going to ban fliers, there would be a huge impact on the amount of people coming to party here, especially at the bigger clubs. It would be really drastic.”

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