



Utility Advisory Committee

Regional ban on single-use plastic grocery bags

Agenda Date: 1/3/2013
Agenda Item Number:
File Number: 13-0008

Type: report **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

Regional ban on single-use plastic grocery bags

Issue:

Single-use plastic bags contaminate curbside recycling, become litter and only an estimated 5 to 8 percent get recycled. Thurston County is proposing a regionally coordinated effort to reduce plastic bag use and consumption. An estimated 90 million bags are consumed in Thurston County each year.

UAC Deliverable: Recommendation to Council in support of a regional (Countywide) ban on single-use plastic grocery bags.

Staff Contact:

Ron Jones, Waste ReSources

Background and Analysis:

In 2011, the advocacy group Environment Washington asked the Olympia City Council to implement a ban on single-use plastic bags. In response to this request, the UAC and City Council, believing this issue is better suited for a regional approach, recommended it be vetted through the County's Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC).

Following a SWAC recommendation, the Board and Board of County Commissioners directed County staff to conduct an education, outreach and informational gathering campaign to learn about the publics' behavior and perception surrounding plastic shopping bags.

The outreach campaign included further analysis of the issues, researching what other government agencies are doing, online and in-person surveys, behavioral observations and a series of public meetings in each city. Results of the research, outreach and survey effort can be found in the report, Reducing Our Use: Plastic Shopping Bags (see Hyperlink 1). The report includes the SWAC findings with a recommendation for a countywide ban on bags.

County staff has scheduled meetings with each of the seven cities in Thurston County and are seeking a recommendation on how to reduce our use of plastic shopping bags. City staff is seeking a UAC recommendation to Council in support of a regional ban on bags. Details of a ban would be

developed through a stakeholders group

Reducing plastic bag use is consistent with Olympia's Zero Waste Plan, Goal 1 (reduce per capita waste) and Goal 3 (manage Olympia's waste stream responsibly).

Neighborhood/Community Interests: Some residents have voiced their opinion in favor of a ban through phone calls, comment cards and surveys.

Options:

None at this time.

Financial Impact:

Unknown at this time.

Staff Recommendation: Recommend to the Olympia City Council to support a regional ban on single-use plastic bags.

Attachments:

1. Reducing Our Use: Plastic Shopping Bags (see hyperlink)
2. Survey Results: (hyperlink to All Cities' data)
3. Olympia Survey Results
4. Thurston County Staff Report to Cities
5. Zero Waste Plan Summary, pages 1 and 2