



City Council

Approval of an Ordinance Banning Use of Certain Plastic Bags in the City of Olympia

Agenda Date: 10/15/2013
Agenda Item Number: 4.F
File Number: 13-0809

Type: ordinance **Version:** 2 **Status:** Passed

Title

Approval of an Ordinance Banning Use of Certain Plastic Bags in the City of Olympia

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

The Thurston County Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC), on which Mayor Pro Tem Jones represents Olympia, recommends a regionally coordinated ban on single-use, carry out plastic bags.

Olympia's Utility Advisory Committee supports a regional ban (letter attached).

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to adopt on second reading an ordinance banning single-use, carry out plastic shopping bags and authorizing retailers to charge a small fee to offset the cost of retailer-provided recyclable paper bags.

Body

Issue:

Whether to pass an ordinance banning single-use plastic bags as part of a regionally coordinated effort.

Staff Contact:

Ron Jones, Senior Program Specialist, Public Works Waste ReSources, 360.753.8509

Presenter(s):

None. Consent Item.

Background and Analysis [information carried forward from 1st reading staff report]:

Plastic bags are the most common consumer product in the US, with the average resident using 350-500 bags per year. Each bag on average is used for only 12 minutes. Single-use plastic bags contaminate curbside recycling streams and cause litter problems. Only an estimated 5 to 8 percent get recycled annually. Thurston County consumes approximately 90 million bags each year.

On January 15, 2013, the Olympia City Council received a briefing from staff about a proposed countywide ban on plastic bags. With unanimous support from the City's Utility Advisory Committee (Attachment 1), Council gave their recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) to convene a stakeholders group to develop a model ordinance for a countywide ban on single-use plastic bags. At the time, the County Solid Waste Advisory Committee and six of the eight incorporated cities supported this approach.

In June 2013, Thurston County convened a 15-member stakeholders group to develop a model ordinance that each City could use in their individual jurisdictions. The stakeholders group included representation from city and county residents, businesses, and potentially affected industry groups. The group researched ordinances used in other Washington cities to draft the model language. The model ordinance developed by Thurston County was used in preparing the proposed City of Olympia ordinance (Attachment 2).

Status - Tumwater and Thurston County:

The City of Tumwater passed a similar ordinance banning plastic bags on September 17, 2013; Thurston County followed suit on September 24, 2013, for unincorporated areas. The BoCC asked jurisdictions in Thurston County to consider banning single-use plastic bags as a means to reducing their use.

Types of Bags:

The definitions section of the attached ordinance (Section 8.26.020) describes the type of single use, carry out bags covered by the ban.

Enforcement:

The ordinance authorizes Thurston County Environmental Health to enforce provisions of the ordinance. Staff is discussing enforcement capacity and procedures with the County, with a goal of reaching agreement on enforcement and outreach/public information prior to July 1, 2014 when the ban would take effect, if approved.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Since 2011, the City has received over 100 pledge cards and in favor of banning plastic bags. Environment Washington also submitted signatures from 390 citizens and business owners in support of a ban. A smaller number of residents have raised concerns about a plastic bag ban, questioning the value and asking the City to consider the needs of the food bank, homeless community and persons with disabilities if proposing or supporting a ban on plastic bags.

The banning of single use, carry out plastic bags will apply to all retailers within the City, but will have a greater impact on supermarkets. Shoppers will be encouraged to utilize reusable bags or pay a 5 cent charge for a paper bag. The 5 cent charge will go directly to the store to help offset their costs.

The effective date of July 1, 2014 will allow time for City staff to work closely with staff of Thurston County on consistent outreach and education to the public on this topic.

Options:

1. Approve the ordinance.
2. Direct staff to modify the ordinance and bring it back for future Council action.
3. Do not approve the ordinance.

Financial Impact:

No significant impact identified at this time.