

Bainbridge bans plastic bags

By Tristan Baurick

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BAINBRIDGE ISLAND — Bainbridge became the first city in Kitsap — and fifth in the state — to ban plastic bags.

By a unanimous vote Wednesday evening, the City Council approved an ordinance prohibiting thin-film bags common at supermarkets. The ban takes effect Nov. 1.

"It's an expression of our community values," said Councilwoman Kirsten Hytopoulos, who began crafting the [proposed ban late last year](#).

Bainbridge joins Seattle, Bellingham, Edmonds and Mukilteo in enacting bag bans. San Francisco and Portland also have bag bans, as do the nations of China, Italy and South Africa.

The ordinance stresses the impact plastic bags have on the environment.

A plastic bag, the ordinance states, "never biodegrades and only breaks down into smaller and smaller particles which seep into soils or are carried into rivers and lakes, Puget Sound and the world's oceans, posing a threat to animal life and the natural food chain."

A packed City Hall applauded the move.

Of the 15 members of the audience who spoke during public comment, only one opposed the ban, saying she preferred a public vote on the matter.

"Let the people decide rather than govern by decree, which isn't very democratic," M.C. Halvorsen said.

Fourteen-year-old Anika Vroom urged the council to pass the ban, saying adults are piling waste on younger generations.

"I totally support this," she said. "I picked up a plastic bag from Lytle Beach and filled it with all the garbage I could find, and it only took me five minutes."

Councilwoman Sarah Blossom said she was leaning toward voting against the ban until another high school student began lobbying her.

"You've been a big part in changing my mind," Blossom said nodding to Bainbridge High School student Chiara D'Angelo-Patricio.

D'Angelo-Patricio gathered 500 signatures in support of the ban.

Also backing the ban are the Bainbridge Island Downtown Association and Town & Country Market, which believes the measure will be a cost-neutral thanks to a provision allowing stores to charge 5 cents for recyclable paper bags. Safeway, the island's other supermarket, hasn't publicly expressed a position on the Bainbridge ban.

Walt's Market, a small grocery store on the island's south end, opposes the ban. While it likely won't cost Walt's more money, owner Walt Hannon objects on principle.

"I'm just angry the City Council stuck its nose where it doesn't belong," he said, stressing that the city should focus on fining litterers rather than restricting businesses.

Councilman Bob Scales said government restrictions on business have halted several harmful practices, including the use of lead in paints and ozone-depleting chemicals in spray cans.

"There's no question plastic bags are convenient," he said. "There's also no question they're bad for the environment. People will adapt, and it's the right thing to do."



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