

Plastic bag ban redux: Restrictions on single-use bags gain committee approval

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CHICO — Internal Affairs Committee members said Tuesday morning they wanted to find out how the whole Chico community feels about a plastic bag ban.

Committee members voted 2-1 Tuesday to recommend that the Chico City Council develop restrictions on "single-use" plastic bags. Councilman Bob Evans dissented.

"I think it's the right thing to do," Vice Mayor Jim Walker said. "I think there's a problem with single-use plastic bags."

The city would have to develop the restrictions, but bans typically apply to thin plastic bags with handles given out at grocery stores and pharmacies, said Linda Herman, city general services administrative manager. Because stores like Target and Walmart in Chico sell groceries, the restrictions would likely include them as well.

Certain plastic bags, such as those used for produce and meat and to protect newspapers from water are not usually included in the ban.

In March, the council considered the Sustainability Task Force's recommendation to pursue a plastic bag ban and forwarded the issue to the Internal Affairs Committee for vetting.

Evans said he was conflicted on the ban. About half of the public comment he received outside of the meeting was against an ordinance.

He said he thinks all disposable bags are just as damaging as the "single-use" plastic bags.

"Why do we pick on some of them and not all of them?" Evans said.

Evans asked what the cost is of staff working on a ban, the proposed environmental impact report and more.

Councilman Andy Holcombe said the city pays staff anyway and that it would be an opportunity lost to have them working on a ban versus something else.

"I hope we get a good regulation that benefits our community as well as our region and our Earth," Holcombe said.

Robyn DiFalco of the Butte Environmental Council and Sustainability Task Force said she thinks plastic bag bans represent a shift in society moving away from disposables.

"We will look back and say I can't believe we used to do it that way because it doesn't make sense to give out that many single-use bags," DiFalco said.

Chico resident Juanita Sumner said she thinks the issue is a dump problem.

She also said she doesn't think the about 20 people at the meeting represent Chico.

"This will add to the cost of my groceries," Sumner said. "Not in this economy. That's not good."

Sue Hubbard said of the ban, "If it doesn't cover everything anyway, it's a lot of symbolism and no substance."

Tammy Wichman of the task force said to get more community input on the ban, and she thinks the council should move forward with the proposal.

Dave Donnan said he thinks the council should get input from affected businesses.

Herman said if the council decides to pursue a ban, she would have stakeholder meetings on the issue.

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