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Single-use plastic bag reduction policy update

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Community Outreach Coordinator

March 14th, 2019 SWAC Meeting

Review: Board Work Sessions

- **October 9, 2018:** Staff was directed to present on single-use plastic reduction options. Following this meeting, staff was asked to return with more specific research on plastic bag reduction policies
- **December 8, 2018:** Staff presented on policy options to limit plastic carryout bags as well as information on similar policies being considered in other local jurisdictions (City of Hillsboro and City of Beaverton).
- **February 19, 2019:** A consent agenda item was passed directing county counsel to draft code language. Chair Kathryn Harrington expressed a desire to have the code include restaurants as well as retail stores.



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Local plastic bag reduction efforts

Oregon jurisdictions with plastic bag bans on the books or in consideration.



- Ashland – adopted
- Corvallis – adopted
- Eugene – adopted
- Forest Grove – adopted
- Hood River – adopted
- Manzanita – adopted
- McMinnville – adopted
- Milwaukie – adopted
- Portland - adopted
- Hillsboro – adopted
- Lake Oswego – adopted
- Salem – adopted
- Bend- adopted
- Beaverton – proposal
- Fair View – proposal
- Newport – proposal
- Wood Village – proposal
- Tillamook Co. – proposal



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Update: Hillsboro and Beaverton



- Ordinance restricting plastic bags passed on November 20, 2018
- Effective date staggered for large and small businesses; no exemptions
- Businesses charge a minimum \$0.05 fee; restaurants can charge but are not required; stores must exempt low-income community members



- Continuing to develop their proposal following a work session with city council on March 5th
- Council has expressed interest in a policy that aligns with Hillsboro and Washington County for continuity

Key Policy Elements

Staff have conducted stakeholder outreach with Surfrider Foundation and Northwest Grocers Association. Both advocacy organizations agree on following elements:

- Minimum \$0.05 fee for alternative bag to offset cost for retailer and encourage consumer behavior change to reusable bags
- Policies are generally consistent across region



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Other Policy Elements

Other important policy elements:

- The thin plastic bags used for wrapping meat, seafood, loose produce, bulk products, etc are exempt
- Small businesses and restaurants are included, with a longer phase-in time and an option to not charge
- Community members using vouchers or electronic benefits are exempt from charge



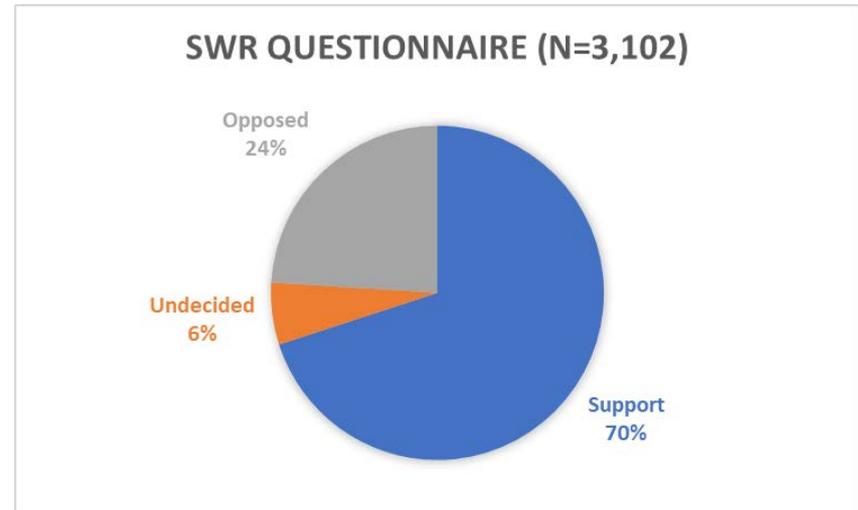
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Additional Stakeholder Outreach

- General public: A short questionnaire was distributed through a variety of channels including social media, SWR's newsletter, and CPO's. Over 3,000 responses have already been tallied
 - 70% Support restricting plastic bags
 - 6% Not sure
 - 24% Opposed



Additional Stakeholder Outreach

- Business and Industry
 - Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce and Northwest Grocer's Association (NWGA) are in support
 - Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association (ORLA) has not provided comment
- Environmental Orgs
 - Surfrider, Environment Oregon, 350.org Washington County very supportive.
 - SOLVE does not engage in advocacy work but expressed interest in helping with education and outreach if the measure passes
 - Waiting on response from Tualatin Riverkeepers
- Recycling and Solid Waste Industry
 - Far West Recycling supports the ordinance- estimates about 20% of labor costs from removing plastic film (including bags)
 - Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association (ORRA) did not take a position



Common Concerns

“There are no known public health risks associated with durable, reusable shopping bags as long as you wash them like you would an article of clothing and use plastic liner bags to contain loose produce and meats prior to placing them inside.”



- Kimberly K. Repp, PhD
Public Health Program Supervisor



Common Concerns

Some commenters said they reuse or recycle plastic bags. However:

- Very low percentage are properly recycled (Surfrider estimates about 9%)
- Single-use plastic bags are often mistakenly included in mixed recycling, where they cause costly and dangerous stoppages when workers have to shut down the machines and remove them.
- Average family takes home almost 1500 plastic bags per year. Plastic bags are used for an average of 12 minutes.



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Statewide Action

- We are monitoring HB 2509 and HB 2653, both of which address plastic bag restrictions. Outcome is still uncertain.
- Surfrider and Northwest Grocers Association recommend continuing local action.



Staff Recommendations

Staff recommends that the Washington County Solid Waste Advisory Committee provide the Washington County Board of Commissioners a favorable recommendation to adopt a proposed ordinance that would restrict the distribution of single-use plastic carryout bags and encourage the use of durable, reusable shopping bags.



Questions?

WashingtonCountyRecycles.com

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