



## Carbondale board bans the bag

More effective than bag fee, trustees say

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CARBONDALE, Colorado — Town trustees here have followed Aspen's lead, opting for a ban on plastic shopping bags at local grocery stores, rather than a fee for their continued use.

The Carbondale Board of Trustees voted 5-1 Tuesday night to adopt the ordinance, which will take effect in May 2012. The ordinance closely mirrors one passed by Aspen City Council earlier this month.

With the move, Carbondale's board also hopes to lead the way for other area municipalities, including Basalt and possibly Glenwood Springs, to follow suit.

"We ought to step up to lead on this, not follow," Carbondale Trustee Frosty Merriott said in making the motion to adopt the ordinance now, rather than waiting to make more revisions.

"This is one thing we can do to help change lifestyles," Merriott said, adding he personally would prefer a total townwide ban on both plastic and paper shopping bags.

That and other possible amendments to the ordinance can be taken up later, he said.

For now, the new ordinance applies only to bags provided at grocery stores larger than 3,500 square feet, which would only include the existing Carbondale City Market store.

It prohibits the distribution of plastic shopping bags to customers and imposes a 20-cent fee for each paper bag shoppers opt to use.

The ban does not apply to other types of plastic bags provided by grocery stores, such as produce and bakery bags and meat wrappers.

Trustee John Foulkrod called it a strong message to send to consumers about the dangerous health and environmental impacts from petroleum-based plastics, as well as over-consumerism in general.

"We're the worst consumers in the world, and we tend to do what we want because we can," Foulkrod said. "And recycling is just a way for people to consume and feel good about it.

"You've got to take a step somewhere to do better, and this is one way to do it," he said of the bag ban.

All of the trustees agreed that a bag ban is better than the previously proposed customer fee for both plastic and paper bags.

Basalt's town board has adopted a bag fee, but is expected to consider a ban as well. Glenwood Springs and Snowmass Village have been waiting to see what action the other Roaring Fork Valley municipalities take.

Carbondale Mayor Stacey Bernot voted against the ordinance, but not because she disagreed with the ban.

"I don't feel like this should just be on grocers," Bernot said in support of a townwide ban that would include other retail stores that provide carry-out bags for their customers.

Bernot said she also was concerned that the 20-cent fee for paper bags was too high, and that the enforcement provisions of the ordinance were unclear.

Under the ordinance, grocers would keep a portion of the fees to cover administrative costs. The remainder would go into a fund to provide education and outreach on the issue, support recycling efforts and provide reusable cloth carry-out bags.

One amendment to the Carbondale ordinance will allow for grocers to provide biodegradable polymer- or starch-based bags in place of plastic or paper bags.

A handful of citizens weighed in on the proposal before the vote was taken.

Carbondale resident Mary Boucher showed up at the meeting with City Market bags hanging from her arms and neck and carrying a large barrel that read "Recycle Plastic Bags Here."

"I have four kids and go to the grocery store four times a week, and we use probably 20 bags each time we go to the store," she said in opposition to the fee proposal.

The ban is even more disconcerting, she said.

"I am heated up about this," Boucher said. "My kids take their lunch to school in the plastic bags ...

"We reuse them, and when they get holes we bring them back to the store and put them in here," she said, pointing to the recycling barrel.

Evan Cree of Carbondale supported the ban, however, and said the issue comes down to changing consumer habits.

"A lot of the opposition I hear is habitual opposition," he said. "This is the right thing to do for the environment in the end."

The various municipal ordinances came about through the efforts of the Community Office for Resource Efficiency (CORE), which initially proposed a uniform bag fee ordinance aimed at curbing the use of disposable shopping bags.

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