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Council Considers Plastic Bags

By Cathy Tyson

Should the city of Lafayette ban plastic bags? Good question, but no answer at this time as the city council weighs pros and cons. After a thorough presentation by the Environmental Task Force recently, several key questions still lingered. Task force member Dick Holt suggested a phased in approach and said, "The time has come."

At issue is attempting to adjust consumer behavior by charging a small fee for paper bags in order to encourage the use of cloth or recyclable bags. If adopted, and that's a big if at this point, Lafayette would be joining 37 Bay Area cities and neighboring counties that include Marin, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz, and other cities up and down the state from Ukiah to Dana Point that restrict single-use bags. Although the number varies depending on the

source, government source Cal Recycle 911 estimates only 3 percent of single use plastic bags were recycled in 2009; the rest end up in landfills or as litter.

It seems like the clear trend is toward banning disposable plastic bags. If adopted, Lafayette would be the first city in Contra Costa County to do so.

Supporters point out that single-use disposable bags pollute the environment, ultimately contribute to climate change and are costly to taxpayers.

Comments at the meeting represented a variety of viewpoints. Steve Richard, president of Sustainable Lafayette, noted there are discounts at major retailers already but that voluntary effort hasn't made a substantial dent in bag behavior.

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Bike to Work!

Tomorrow, May 9 is Bike to Work day. The city of Lafayette wants to encourage folks to get out of their cars and hop on their bikes, so they are teaming up with the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Sustainable Lafayette to provide an "energizer" station at Plaza Park with coffee, bagels, fruit and other complimentary goodies to nudge would-be riders toward bike helmets and away from car keys. The edible energy will be available from 6:30 to 8:30 a.m. at the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Moraga Road.

Listen to Civic Meetings from Home

By Cathy Tyson

For Lafayette residents who want to be engaged in municipal issues, but prefer the comforts of home, audio broadcasts of all city council, planning commission, design review and circulation commission meetings are available live, and are recorded to listen at your convenience. With fast forward, rewind and pause, it's never been easier to be a fly on the wall when lounging with your laptop.

"We decided to go with a new vendor called Granicus to archive all of our public meeting agendas and documents after the old vendor discontinued their service. As a bonus, Granicus also offers us the ability to record and broadcast meetings live," said Tracy Robinson, administrative services director for the city of Lafayette.

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