



**Independent, locally owned and operated!**

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published December 17th, 2014

## Lafayette Bans Plastic Bags and Styrofoam

*By Cathy Tyson*

Soon the familiar options of "plastic or paper" will be heard no more in Lafayette. The City Council formally adopted new rules Dec. 8 to ban single-use plastic shopping bags at 16 local establishments. The ban will take effect on July 1 and will impose a 10-cent charge for paper bags, impacting mainly large grocery stores and pharmacies. The approval goes one step further than SB 270, the statewide regulation, by also banning Styrofoam from use at food establishments. Municipalities had the option to customize their own new rules if enacted before the Jan. 1 deadline imposed by the state.

Supporters call it reducing two costly, environmentally damaging and easily preventable sources of litter and pollution. Board members of Sustainable Lafayette applauded the decision to draft a local plastic bag ordinance similar to those created by Walnut Creek and other communities. The group supports the 10-cent charge for paper bags, saying it is "vital to the success and effectiveness of the ordinance." They feel it provides an incentive to embrace reusable shopping bags, creates consistency with neighboring communities, and doesn't switch issues - fixing one problem, plastic pollution; but creating another problem - the environmental impact from paper bags.

Recycled paper bags will be the new normal, although the newly adopted ordinance requires stores to charge customers a 10-cent fee for each paper bag, with the revenue collected going to the store - not to the government. This will affect businesses in Lafayette including grocery stores, pharmacies, liquor stores, convenience stores and Chow. Of course, shoppers who bring their own re-usable cloth bags, the most environmentally savvy solution, can save a dime.

The change creates a dilemma at Diablo Foods, which long ago switched to environmentally friendly recycled paper bags and sparingly uses plastic bags made from more expensive recycled materials. They incentivize shoppers with a 10-cent credit per bag for those who bring their own. Manager David Collier explained that the store would prefer to continue to use complimentary paper bags, but the new rules will force them to charge customers the 10-cent fee starting in July. He estimates that roughly half of Diablo Foods' customers already bring in cloth bags for their purchases.

While some people recycle their single-use plastic bags, the majority, approximately 88 percent according to a study by the Environmental Protection Agency, don't get recycled.

The new rules dovetail with the city's environmental strategy that includes a goal of diverting 75 percent of solid waste from landfill. After monitoring plastic bag use, the Environmental Task Force recommended that this move would: reduce litter, which can end up in creeks and storm drain systems, limit negative impact on wildlife, and diminish use of fossil fuels.

Gov. Jerry Brown signed the nation's first statewide ban on single-use plastic bags, SB270, on Sept. 30. At the time he said, "This bill is a step in the right direction - it reduces the torrent of plastic polluting our beaches, parks and even the vast ocean itself. We're the first to ban these bags, and we won't be the last."

Styrofoam, the second component of Lafayette's new ordinance, is the brand name and registered trademark for extruded polystyrene foam manufactured by Dow Chemical Company. The EPA and the International Agency for Research on Cancer have determined styrene as a possible human carcinogen. Polystyrene food packaging is a double whammy - it's not recyclable and chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, are used in the manufacturing process. There is evidence that CFCs, when discharged into the atmosphere, degrade the earth's ozone layer.

Reach the reporter at: [cathy@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:cathy@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA