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## Sack the Bag, Says Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson



Sabrina Barba, helper, Holly George, baker, and co-owners/operators Ahmed Shibli and Maria Gastelumendi, who is holding a biodegradable to-go container at the Rising Loafer Cafe and Bakery in Lafayette. The business owners have always been environmentally conscious, and will have no problem with the bag ban since they already embrace recycled compostable products.

Photo C. Tyson

the bag ban, calling it another example of a "creeping nanny state" and "micro managing."

Drugstore CVS will switch over to recycled paper bags without a problem since they have other stores that currently use paper bags. "In compliance with the city of Lafayette's new ordinance, as of July 1, we will no longer provide plastic, single-use carryout bags to our customers," said Stephanie Cunha, public relations manager. "Per the ordinance, reusable plastic and paper bags will be available upon request for a 10 cents per bag fee. Our reusable bags are made from post-consumer recycled material and are 100 percent recyclable."

The goal of the new ordinance is to reduce litter and waste, encourage reusable bags as well as reduce contamination in recycling and composting programs. According to the city website page under Green Lafayette, "The purpose of the regulations is to reduce the impact of disposable bags on the city and the environment. A charge per bag has been shown to reduce the number of disposable bags used."

Single use plastic bags are the most common type of litter, and most types of plastic bags are not biodegradable. It's estimated that more than 13 billion single-use plastic bags are generated in California annually, which translates into approximately 247 million pounds of bags that end up in landfills every year, according to the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery. The new rules help fulfill the city's environmental strategy that includes a goal of diverting 75 percent of solid waste from landfill.

Plastic bags without handles that carry produce, meat, chicken or bulk items will still be complimentary at stores.

Code Enforcement Officer Adam Foster will be on the job to ensure that businesses are

Starting July 1, Lafayette joins more than 100 other communities within California, banning single-use plastic bags at retailers, requiring a 10-cent minimum charge per bag at select businesses, and also making changes to take-out food packaging requirements. Adopted in December of 2014, Ordinance 626 regulating single use carryout bags had a pause before enactment to give retailers a chance to make plans and presumably order either compostable plastic bags, or bags made from at least 40 percent post-consumer recycled content.

Businesses that are affected include grocery stores Safeway, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods Market, Diablo Foods, Open Sesame and restaurants that have a take-out component, such as Chow, plus pharmacies, convenience stores and liquor stores. Restaurants, delicatessens, and even food trucks can't distribute single use plastic bags with its take-out food. The other component of the ordinance prohibits Styrofoam containers; food and beverages must be given to patrons in compostable or recyclable receptacles.

While some stores are comfortable using paper bags, others are not happy with the plastic bag ban. Although Jackson's Wine and Spirits has always used paper bags, General Manager Kip Bruzzone was clear that he is completely against

monitored, but he's likely to encourage a carrot rather than a stick approach. "The city's new ordinance requires a number of businesses to make adjustments," he said. "Extensive education and outreach will be offered before any enforcement is conducted."

This is "a long time coming" said Michael Cass, associate planner and staff liaison to the Environmental Task Force. He anticipates an adjustment period, but adds the city is dedicated to "work with businesses to help them succeed." The Lafayette regulations are modeled after Walnut Creek's plastic bag ordinance that started in September of 2014. Moraga and Orinda have no bag ban.

If the bag ban concept seems vaguely familiar, residents may recall back in October 2014 Gov. Jerry Brown signing into law Senate Bill 270, the landmark bill banning single use bags statewide that was supposed to go into effect on Jan. 1, 2015. Shortly after SB 270 was signed into law, the American Progressive Bag Alliance, representing the plastic bag manufacturing industry, gathered signatures to qualify for a referendum to repeal it. The organization collected over 800,000 signatures from California voters, more than enough to qualify to put the referendum on the ballot. Regardless of the outcome of that vote, Lafayette is saying goodbye to plastic bags.

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