

# City of Minneapolis

## Request for Committee Action

**To:** Health, Environment & Community Engagement  
**Date:** 3/21/2016  
**From:** Ward 2 and Ward 6 Council Offices  
**Prepared by:** Council Members Cam Gordon and Abdi Warsame  
**Presented by:** Ward 2 Policy Aide Robin Garwood and Ward 6 Policy Aide Marcela Sotela  
**File type:** Ordinance

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**Subject:**  
"Bring Your Own Bag" Ordinance

**Description:**  
Passage of an ordinance amending Title 11, Chapter 225 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances relating to Health and Sanitation: Garbage and Refuse, adding a new Article VII regulating the use of carryout bags in retail establishments.

**Previous Actions:**  
Ordinance Introduction: 8/21/15  
Referral to staff: 8/24/15  
Resolution 2015R-250, Establishing recycling and composting goals for the City of Minneapolis, adopted 6/19/15

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**Background/Analysis:**  
Plastic and paper carryout bags have significant impacts on the environment and waste stream. These impacts include litter, waste generation, upstream lifecycle impacts, and negative impacts on recycling facilities. Those impacts are addressed in more detail below.

To address these impacts, Council Member Cam Gordon requested that the Minneapolis Community Environmental Advisory Commission (CEAC) research the carryout bag issue, including solutions from peer cities, and present a set of recommendations to the Council for addressing it.

On 6/3/15, CEAC presented its research and recommendations. The proposed ordinance is based on these recommendations. The purpose of the ordinance is to provide incentives for consumers to bring reusable bags with them. Key features of the ordinance include:

- A prohibition on plastic carryout bags given to consumers at the point of sale, with exemptions including:
  - o Bags without handles used to package food or small hardware items,
  - o Bags used to contain takeout food items
  - o Newspaper, door-hanger, and laundry bags
  - o Bags sold in packages containing multiple bags
- A pass-through fee on paper, compostable, and reusable bags given to consumers at the point of sale, with exemptions on the pass-through charge for customers who receive food assistance, or a credit for customers who use reusable bags.

**Other Communities:**  
Many communities across the United States and the world have adopted laws to address the impacts created by carryout bags.

US Cities, States and Counties: Over 160 US cities have enacted carryout bag bans and/or fees, including Seattle, WA; Portland, OR; Austin, TX, Dallas, TX; Cambridge, MA; Santa Fe, NM; Aspen, CO; Richmond, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Monterey, and Oakland, CA. The whole state of Hawaii has banned plastic carryout bags.

Other Countries: Many countries, including Kenya, Rwanda, Botswana, Ethiopia, Somalia, Bangladesh and China have banned plastic bags, and many more countries have enacted carryout bag fees.

**Community Engagement:**

Council Member Gordon and his staff attended the Licensing Department's Business Advisory Group on 8/19/15 and 2/19/16. Council Member Gordon shared information on the proposed ordinance, including draft ordinance text and an explanatory one-page document, on 1/8/16, with all officially-designated Minneapolis business organizations, expressing willingness to meet with any interested organization. Council Members Gordon and Warsame have organized a community meeting specifically geared towards engaging Spanish- and Somali-speaking small business owners on 3/17/16. The authors have also met with representatives of the plastic bag, paper bag, and grocery lobbies.

**Implementation:**

The proposed text authorizes the departments of Solid Waste and Recycling, Licenses and Consumer Services, Regulatory Services and Health to enforce this ordinance. No one department currently inspects all retailers that would be covered by this ordinance. The ongoing Zero Waste Policy Plan may recommend changes to the City's staffing structure that will offer a more ideal implementation and enforcement solution. For this reason, Council Member Gordon will offer the following staff direction as part of the proposed ordinance:

Motion

By Gordon

Directing Solid Waste and Recycling, Licenses and Community Services, Regulatory Services and Health staff to report back to the HECE committee no later than 1/31/17 with recommendations for implementation and enforcement of the Bring Your Own Bag ordinance. Such recommendations should reflect the overall strategies laid out in the Zero Waste Policy Plan.

**More details on environmental impacts of carryout bags:**

**LITTER**

- In 2002, 50 to 80 million bags ended up as litter in the US
- Once plastic enters the environment, it never leaves – just becomes smaller and smaller pieces of plastic
- In a recent river cleanup, 1 mile of the Mississippi River over 2.5 hours generated 5 tons of trash, including many plastic bags

**WASTE**

- Minnesotans throw away 87,000 tons of plastic bags every year
- In Minneapolis, most plastic bags end up in the downtown garbage burner
- Less than 5% of standard HDPE plastic bags are recycled in the US, while more than 49% of paper bags are

**LIFECYCLE IMPACTS**

- All bags require energy to make, create waste, and cause greenhouse gas emissions and air and water pollution
- Paper carryout bags create 64 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions and 31 pounds of water pollution per 10,000 uses

- Plastic carryout bags create 9 pounds of solid waste, 18 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions and 2 pounds of water pollution per 10,000 uses

**NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON RECYCLING FACILITIES**

- Plastic bags wrap around sorting machines, requiring the sorting line to be shut down several times each day
- Plastic bags that end up in recycling facilities are not recycled

**Financial Review:**

**No additional appropriation required, amount included in current budget.**

**Future budget impact anticipated.**

Enter SUPB goals explanation.

**Attachments:**

1. "Bring Your Own Bag" Ordinance Powerpoint Presentation
2. "Bring Your Own Bag" Ordinance Text
3. CEAC Recommendations