

From: City of Minneapolis Community Environmental Advisory Commission

To: City of Minneapolis City Council; Mayor Jacob Frey

Cc: City of Minneapolis Sustainability Division; City of Minneapolis Department of Public Works

Date: June 6, 2019

Dear Minneapolis City Council:

The Community Environmental Advisory Commission (CEAC) thanks you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Bring Your Own Bag ordinance. We support the ordinance as a first step in the City's efforts to address the issue of single-use bag waste.¹ We do not feel that it is sufficient to address the challenge comprehensively. For this reason, we would like to offer the following additional recommendations for consideration:

- 1. The success of the ordinance will rely on effective and sustained education and awareness-raising in the community.** The experience of other cities has been that bag fees are often met with an initial drop in bag usage, followed by a gradual increase back to pre-fee usage. Long-term success does not result from fees alone, but must be coupled with educational efforts and programs that raise awareness of bag waste, promote environmental clean-up and beautification, and reward conservation efforts by businesses and customers. Potential strategies include:
 - a. A distribution program of high-quality, washable, and reusable tote bags in disadvantaged communities;
 - b. A recognition program for eco-friendly businesses that employ waste management and reduction techniques;
 - c. A clean-up program to support community action on waste clean-up, particularly in neighborhoods most affected and disadvantaged by plastic waste;
 - d. A competition that celebrates local artists for storytelling and art-making that advances eco-friendly messages; and
 - e. Requirements or incentives for retailers to offer an at-store recycling program that includes clearly-labeled collection bins for plastic bags offered, displays to inform customers of the program, as well as plastic bags labeled to inform customers to return and recycle the bags.

- 2. The ordinance should recognize the initial \$0.05 per bag fee as an important starting point—not an endpoint—and the fee should scale up over time to create a sustained signal for merchants and bag users.** A significantly greater fee, coupled with even more robust education and outreach efforts aimed at easing the impact of the fee on low and moderate income patrons, should be a part of a long-term plan envisioned by the ordinance. After the Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance is adopted and

¹ Chair addendum: The vote was 6-2 in favor of sending this letter as written. The dissenting voices are concerned about a variety of things, including:

- The fact that low-income community voices have not been reached by the survey and that their perspectives may not be covered by this ordinance
- The impact this ordinance will have on those who are moderate- to low-income, but do not qualify for federal programs
- The fee being kept by retailers, without the public knowing that that is the case, which also leads to an incentive to retailers for selling single-use bags

implemented, Solid Waste and Recycling staff should be required to explore and report to the City Council on the following issues:

- a. Effectiveness of the bag fee on reducing single use bag consumption;
 - b. The year(s) in which implementation of an escalated fee may be necessary to achieve continued reduction in single-use bags;
 - c. Evaluation of economic impact of bag fees on low and moderate income residents; and
 - d. Methods for the City to collect the revenue from incremental fee increases (assuming that all of the initial \$0.05 fees will remain dedicated to retailers to defray business costs related to the policy).
- 3. The ordinance should prompt Intergovernmental Relations staff to advocate against the statewide preemption of the City's ban on single-use plastics.** CEAC recommends that the City identify opportunities to engage state policymakers and legislators on this issue. Additionally, staff should be asked to explore a coordinated fee with other jurisdictions across the state.
- 4. The City Council should integrate these efforts with the broader goals of the Zero Waste Plan, along with funding for implementation and education.**

We plan to continue working with you and your staff on this important policy and its implementation. Please do not hesitate to reach out to CEAC's Zero Waste and Beautification Subcommittee Chair, [Cody Welchlin](#), for further information and feedback. Thank you for your leadership on this matter.

Sincerely,

Erin Niehoff, Chair
On behalf of the Community Environmental Advisory Commission