

## Arcata City Council passes plastic bag ban

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The Arcata City Council on Wednesday voted unanimously to approve an ordinance that will ban the use of plastic bags at convenience food stores, pharmacies, supermarkets and both large and small businesses.

"I really think it's time for us at least in Arcata to promote reusable bags," Councilwoman Alex Stillman said.

The council unanimously agreed that stores under 10,000 feet should not be exempt from the ban because it sends a stronger message.

Food establishments will not be affected because the city is waiting until litigation out of San Francisco regarding a ban of plastic bags at restaurants is resolved, according to the city. However the ordinance could be amended later to include these businesses.

Plastic bags used for bulk foods, meat, produce and prescription medications are exempt.

Members of the public said they supported the council's action.

"We are big supporters of this ban that you are proposing," said Jessica Hall, of Humboldt Baykeeper. "The more we can restrict the use of these bags ... the greater benefit to the environment there will be."

According to city staff, the goal of the ban is to reduce waste, litter and greenhouse gas emissions by promoting the use of reusable bags.

A paper bag made of at least 40 percent post-consumer recyclable materials will be available for 10 cents each. The fee would be charged by the retailer, and the store would keep the profit.

"I think our ordinance reflects many of the successful ordinances throughout the state," Councilman Mark Wheatley said.

The ordinance will take effect Feb. 1.

In other news, the council voted unanimously in favor of an affordable housing plan that will include seven affordable units in the 49-unit complex of the Mad River Parkway Community subdivision.

The council also voted to authorize Mayor Shane Brinton to sign a letter supporting changes to the U.S. Highway 101 safety improvement project, if a separate pedestrian and bike path is added.

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