



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION
Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Recommendation Number (20150114-003a): Single Use Bag Ordinance Study

WHEREAS Austin's single-use bag ordinance will have been in effect for two years on March 1 of this year, and

WHEREAS since that time other Texas cities including Laredo, Dallas and Port Aransas have passed ordinances of their own, and

WHEREAS many other Texas communities large and small are considering ordinances as well, and

WHEREAS Litter Abatement Division Manager Vidal Maldonado said in a June 10, 2013 email to Austin Resource Recovery Department director Bob Gedert that single-use plastic bags were "basically non-existent" in ARR litter clean ups, and

WHEREAS the single-use bag ordinance is a key element in Austin's Zero Waste Master Plan, and

WHEREAS various predictions were made in the lead up to the ordinance's passage as to whether it would be successful or not, and

WHEREAS the city did not collect baseline data on litter, bag waste, bags in recycling residuals or other possible metrics

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Zero Waste Advisory Commission (ZWAC) requests a report from the Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) Department outlining specific results of the single-use bag ordinance, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Zero Waste Advisory Commission advises ARR staff to contact peer cities and other Texas cities without single-use bag ordinances to estimate how many bags they collect in litter collections and compare this to estimated numbers of bags collected by ARR litter abatement staff, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ZWAC advises ARR staff to ask litter abatement nonprofits in Austin such as Keep Austin Beautiful to compare the estimated number of bags they clean up with any historic data they maintain and to data provided by other Keep America Beautiful chapters in peer cities and other Texas cities without single-use bag ordinances, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ZWAC advises ARR staff to coordinate with MRF operators to compare the estimated number of single-use plastic bags present in recycling residuals in Austin

residential and commercial recycling as compared to their residential and commercial customers in communities without single-use bag ordinances, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ZWAC advises ARR staff to identify communities without single-use bag ordinances undergoing a waste audit and ask them to record the estimated number of single-use bags for comparison to data ARR will obtain as they perform an audit of Austin's waste, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ZWAC advises ARR staff to identify any other potential anecdotal sources of comparison including before and after pictures of creeks and waterways, experiences of retailers, city employees, MRF operators or others who experience the costs of bag pollution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ZWAC advises ARR staff to make inquiries among area retailers as to any documentable effects of the single-use bag ordinance requirements on sales, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ARR staff will present all of this information to the ZWAC as they collect it, culminating in a final report to be issued no later than October 2015.

Date of Approval: January 14, 2015

Record of the vote: Unanimously Approved by the Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Attest: _____

 ARR Director

(Staff signature)