

# Council: plastic bag ban is premature

**By GREG GILES**  
NEWS EDITOR

City leaders rejected a recommendation by an advisory board this week to take a step that could lead to a ban on single-use plastic shopping bags.

The board said its impact on the city is unknown and could drive business away.

Council Members Fred Fraize and Bob Daniels supported a motion made at Tuesday's council meeting to support a resolution backing legislation that would give the city the option to impose a ban.

"I know it's going to cause a lot of controversy," Fraize said, "and we should consider it."

Daniels said he supported the resolution because plastics "don't deteriorate in the landfill and stay forever."

"I know it's going to be a problem to get rid of them, but we need to get rid of them," Daniels said.

The remaining members on Council had reservations but didn't rule out some kind of future consideration.

"I understand the good intentions, but I need a lot more information," said Council Member Rich

Cautero. "I'm not sure the city is equipped to handle this type of ordinance."

Cautero said the resolution would be most effective if it had county and state backing.

Without it, there's the "possibility of consumers shifting outside the city limits."

In other words, taking their business elsewhere.

The places where plastic bag bans have been adopted, he said, have a host of exemptions that aren't addressed in the resolution council was being asked to support.

Mayor John Holic called the resolution "premature."

"I didn't see anything in the research that talks about biodegradable (starched) bags. Going to a resolution as a first step is (too) strong," Holic said. "We haven't talked to any stores on how this will impact on them, and what impact it would have on our residents."

During public comment, a chemical engineer said he took exception to a small group of environmentally friendly people trying to impose their will on the city.

"Could you imagine what it would be like if we didn't

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**"I know it's going to be a problem to get rid of them, but we need to get rid of them"**

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— **Bob Daniels,**  
Venice City Council Member

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have plastic bags?" said Gerald Bullano. "Just continue to enforce ordinances already on the books."

In late May, the Environmental Advisory Board backed the resolution promoted by the Suncoast Chapter of Surfrider Foundation, based in St. Petersburg, to resurrect a bill in the Florida Legislature that would give coastal communities with less than 100,000 residents the ability to opt out of a preemption law that states municipalities may not ban plastics.

"The resolution would

allow pilot programs where at least coastal communities can regulate plastic bag bans," said John Kurz, representing Surfrider.

He called Tuesday's City Council discussion "a mischaracterization" of what the resolution is about.

"It's about support for a House bill," Kurz said. "It's merely a resolution to support an option for cities to do that. It's not something you have to sign into right away. It gives you an option."

The discussion by the Environmental Advisory Board in May focused

more on a potential future ban on plastic bags at the beach.

EAB Chairman Tom Jones said after Tuesday's council vote the issue will likely be brought up again at the advisory board level.

"I was disappointed in the outcome of the Council vote," Jones said. "The Environmental Advisory

Board felt that passing this resolution and joining with over 20 other Florida coastal communities and counties who support lessening the negative impact of single-use plastic bags was an important first step in helping to reduce litter and keep our parks and beaches clean."

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