



New Bag Plan Would Eliminate Fees

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Just days before Austin Mayor, Lee Leffingwell's, plastic bag ban goes up for a vote, a company is now offering an alternative. The latest draft of the ban cuts out the fees.

Council member, Mike Martinez said he wished Texas Disposal Systems would have come forward a whole lot sooner with the new proposal since council is voting on the plastic bag ban Thursday.

But Martinez says, even if the ban passes, the city has a whole year to test out pilot programs.

Plastic bags cause all sorts of problems according to TDS President and CEO, Bob Gregory.

"These bags get caught up in the conveyors and the screens that are used within the system to separate the recyclables and they gob it up, they stop it up," Gregory said. "If there's a lot of them or if they're the reusable bags, they can actually break the equipment."

Gregory said he came up with an alternative to the city's proposed plastic bag ban. He calls it "a bag in a bag," essentially making it easier to recycle plastic bags.

"To stuff the plastic in bags that can easily be sorted out and picked out."

Martinez said there's merit to his proposal.

"Anytime you can recycle another product, you need to review that proposal."

The latest plastic bag draft allows a whole year of education before it takes effect March 2013. It also takes out the 10 cent per bag retails would have charged.

Martinez said a lot can be done in that time.

"In that year, we should run some pilot programs and we should determine if we can truly recycle plastic in a manner that meets our zero waste goals but at the same time provide opportunities for customers around the community that can still use that as an option."

Exemptions to the plastic bag ban, single use bags for meats, produce, bulk goods, dry cleaning, newspaper delivery, and restaurant carryout foods.

The Director of Austin Resource Recovery, the company that came up with the latest plastic bag ban draft, said, Gregory's plan would only provide service to the Austin Resource Recovery customer base and leave out some 200,000 households.