

March 5, 2012

Whispers 3-5-12

Council approves bag ban . . . In the wee, late hours last Friday – about the time the bars closed – Council members approved the long-debated ban on the use of most paper and plastic bags in retail stores in the city. The ban goes into effect in March 2013, and the city plans a \$2 million education program to get consumers ready for the change. With a few exceptions, stores will only be able to offer reusable bags made of cloth, durable materials or thicker paper and plastic bags with handles. The ordinance has been a priority for **Mayor Lee Leffingwell**, as well as a numbers of environmental groups. There was major opposition from the **Texas Retailers Association**, which complained that the ban would be a burden on their members and their customers. There was also a last-minute push by **Texas Disposal Systems** to preserve the bags and emphasize recycling, but it got no traction with the Council. (See *In Fact Daily*, March 1, 2012) Austin is the first major city in Texas to pass such a ban and one of only a handful across the county. Due to other matters on the agenda, the Council didn't even take up the issue until after 11pm. After about a dozen or so comments, Council members unanimously voted it in . . .