Proposed Plastic Reduction Ordinance

City Council

October 11, 2022

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Sustainability Director

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Key Takeaways

- Pollution from single use plastic is a problem and regulation is a new area of concern not included in current environmental plans or goals.
- Nonprofit partners have proposed and both a Council Committee and Advisory Committee have reviewed and supported further study and analysis of plastic reduction ordinance(s).
- Staff recommends a phased approach with the first phase being to prohibit plastic bags for curbside leaf collection.
- Staff further recommends building on the efforts of our nonprofit partners to solicit additional stakeholder feedback to both inform the draft language of a potential prohibition of plastic bags at point of sale and disposable foodware products ordinance as well as the implementation plan

Single Use Plastic is a Problem

- Harmful to our environment
- Harmful to our people
- Harmful to our operations
- New area of concern, not currently identified through existing Council adopted environmental goals



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Actions Taken

- Promoting paper leaf collection bags since 2018
- Engagement conducted by Plastic Free WNC:
  - Survey responses from 60 area businesses
  - Interviews with low income, unhoused, and vulnerable population organizations
- Sustainability Advisory Committee reviewed, revised, and supported plastic reduction ordinance concept
- Preliminary legal analysis conducted:
  - Although no current legal precedent exists in North Carolina: Confidence in authority to regulate single use plastic
  - Additional legal research is required on the 10 cent fee paper bags component

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Actions Taken

- Preliminary analysis by Equity and Inclusion Department recommends:
  - Extension of implementation timeline
  - Significantly more analysis on impact to vulnerable social groups
  - Robust stakeholder and community engagement
  - Utilize 3rd party expertise to ensure public engagement is unbiased and comprehensive
  - Consider alternatives to a full bag ban

Staff Recommendation

Take a phased approach to regulation of single use plastics:

1. Phase 1: Align with Council's strategic priority to **improve/expand core services** by updating Chapter 15 of the City Code to prohibit plastic bags from curbside leaf litter collection
2. Phase 2: Build robust public input campaign around further regulation of single use plastic from the foundation created by our nonprofit partners
3. Utilize public input to inform draft language and implementation plan for Council's consideration

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Next Steps

- At the request of the Governance Committee staff has proposed a more condensed timeline
- The proposed new timeline is accelerated by one year as compared to staff's original recommendation
- Organizational work plan priorities will remain but the community engagement and outreach for the Climate Justice Initiative may be extended

Next Steps: Proposed Timeline

Phase 1:
Curbside Leaf Litter Collection Code Amendment

Phase 2: Point of Sale Plastic Reduction Public Engagement Campaign and Ordinance Development

October 2022	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023	March 2023	October 2023
Internal Engagement 60 days to conduct internal engagement focused on: • Impact to operations • Identify who's missing from the conversation	**Update Ordinance** Propose ordinance revision to Chapter 15 of the City Code prohibiting plastic bags from curbside leaf collection for Council's consideration	**Design Public Input Survey** Utilize previous survey results from Plastic Free WNC, equity analysis, public input resource, and internal engagement to design public input survey	**Launch Public Input Survey** Survey will remain open for 30 days.	**Review & Refine Engagement** Estimated 6 months to: • Identify gaps • Develop focus group engagement strategy	**Recommendation to Council** Informed by public input

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