

Edwardsville City Council Approves Plastic Bag Ordinance of 10 Cents at Businesses

by Leanne Guthrie, Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville City Council continued discussion and made a decision Tuesday night about a plastic bag ordinance and another sign variance.

The single-use bag ordinance was by far the most interesting topic Tuesday and approval would make bags cost 10 cents each in Edwardsville. Multiple members of the public spoke in favor of the plastic bag ordinance, which the council ended up approving after lengthy discussion.

The council overwhelmingly spoke in favor of the plastic bag changes within Edwardsville. Every alderman voted yes to the ordinance. The approval was met with much applause from the community members in standing-room only council chambers.

It was also made clear that restaurants and businesses under seven-thousand square feet will not be included in the bag fee ordinance. Signage will be required at these business to make it clear to customers both while entering stores and at registers that there is a fee on bags.

Alderman Art Risavy spoke before the vote and explained the ordinance, answering many questions regarding the new fee in the process.

“The ‘Bring Your Own Bag Glen-Ed’ group has led a grassroots effort to encourage the reduction of single-use carry out bags in Edwardsville, Alderman Art Risavy said. “They are attempting to educate and change customer behavior and avert from single-use carry out bags to reusable bags. To assist in this change, the group has requested that the City of Edwardsville pass a local ordinance to require retailers to assess a 10-cent fee per single-use carry out bag provided to retail establishment customers.

“The 10-cent per bag fee would be retained by retail establishments to offset the cost of the bags and the retail administrative expenses for charging point of sale expenses and record keeping. The fee would not be applicable to retail establishments with less than seven-thousand square feet and it is proposed to make the ordinance effective April 1, 2020, to give the retailers and the public time to adapt and prepare for the new fee. By enacting a proposed ordinance, the city is attempting to discourage and reduce the use of single-use carry out bags in the city.”

Alderman William Krause spoke to thank the ‘Bring Your Own Bag’ group.

“This is actually what I would like to call a grassroots movement in action. This is where citizens are engaging with their government, this is the very example of how democracy is supposed to work. It is not just the seven of us up here dictating from a pulpit, it is taking feedback from the community and listening to our constituents that are going out there and doing the leg work and engaging with the business community, engaging with the chamber of commerce and the individuals that live within our community. And so I thank you for all of your actions over the course of the last two years that led us to this vote tonight. I am in strong support of the ordinance that is in front of us tonight,” said William Krause.

Before the vote, after each council member had took a moment to speak on the changes taking place within Edwardsville. It was recognized there is a lot more that can be done within the community to be more green. A big one would be the use of solar energy, but smaller ideas were tossed around such as a straw ban, or finding a way to discourage single-use plastic bottles.

“I’m quite proud of this group, not only the council members but the participants. You’re all activists as far as I’m concerned. You took something and you talked about it and you worked at it and now you’ve got action. The root word of activism is action. I’m also a realist and I know that there are other things out there. We have to pay real close attention to our environment and the impact we have on it. We are forming a group that is going to discuss this further. Earth Edwardsville is the concept because it’s also about renewable energy and it’s about green space and preservation of things that we are all blessed to have here. So I appreciate it, one of the things pointed out was straws, there are things that we can all do to make a difference and these are good steps. I appreciate everyone’s participation,” said Mayor Hal Patton.