

Ban: Mood of city councilors mixed

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Seaside's Laura Allen asked the City Council to pass an ordinance that would ban single-use plastic bags in stores and restaurants, and get people to use reusable bags for their purchases.

"We need to stop the flow of plastics, or at least reduce the flow of plastics into our environment, and we can start here in Seaside by replacing the single-use bag with reusable bags," Allen said.

The mood of city councilors was mixed.

Councilor Tom Horning called a plastic bag ban "as important as the Oregon Bottle Bill or preventing smoking in public spaces. It's a life and health issue, and a lifestyle issue."

Others sought to know the impacts on local businesses and visitors. Councilor Steve Wright asked for input from retailers, and to see data that would be more reflective of "Seaside numbers."

"I do believe we should be on the forefront, but the more you make it specific to us, the better," Wright said.

Brian Owen, the executive director of the Seaside Chamber of Commerce, said he had brought the proposal to his board. "We would definitely want a seat at the table," he said. "I know the business community will have a lot of questions."



AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis

Kroger, the nation's largest grocery chain, will phase out the use of plastic bags in its stores by 2025.

At the suggestion of Mayor Jay Barber, the council will hold a workshop to give the broader community, including retail merchants, an opportunity for comment.

If the consensus is to draft an ordinance, a public hearing would be held before the ordinance would become law.

At least one business owner has signed on.

"We're ocean people," Griffin said after the meeting. "I feel like we have a responsibility. We have no plastic bags. Everything we have is paper, compostable — even our takeout (packaging) — everything is paper or cardboard."

Businesses need an explanation of the benefits, he said, "and then they will jump on board."

"We've received a lot of

positive feedback," Griffin added. "Especially from kids. They love the fact that we have paper straws. People see it, they appreciate it and they keep on coming back."

Gearhart is also considering a plastic bag ban.

At last Wednesday's council meeting, City Councilor Paulina Cockrum asked for an April work session on the topic. Whether a ban would extend to restaurants and takeout food will be a matter of discussion.

Bebe Michel, an advocate for a ban, said the city could model the ordinance on a similar ban in Bend.

The Bend ordinance does not include restaurants, while a similar ordinance in Manzanita does, which "has implications as well," Michel said.

Cannabis cafes: Club in Portland offers place to smoke

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southeast Portland. She said tourists come to Oregon to try marijuana and leave sadly disappointed.

"And some people didn't know that they weren't able to smoke in the hotels, and some people were just smoking in the street and they get yelled at for that. So there isn't really anywhere for people to smoke," said Kemple.

She said some tourists end up just smoking in their hotel rooms and then paying the no-smoking fine.

Kemple says the original plans for her business involved a cafe — so people could buy marijuana and enjoy it on site. The building's still plumbed for an espresso machine. So if the law changes, she's ready.

"At some point, we want to offer, you know, drinks in the front. And we're going to have like seating tables outside. We want to have that kind of casual environment. We're going to try and get food trucks outside, and then maybe offer CBD-infused drinks. Obviously not psychoactive things yet. But if we could, we would definitely go that route," said Kemple.

She thinks allowing customers to smoke cannabis on site would boost the bottom line.

area, outside, out of view of the public where only people 21 and older could access," said Chapman.

Lawmakers at a public hearing in February balked at the idea of carving out an exception to the Indoor Clean Air Act for cannabis cafes.

The cafes would give tourists and other cannabis consumers a legal place to get together and smoke.

The cafes also promise to significantly increase tax revenues.

Supporters will now wait to see if the amendment is enough to convince lawmakers to continue fighting for cannabis cafes.

Regardless of the details of the bill, some observers question whether further changes to Oregon's cannabis laws would attract additional attention from federal prosecutors.

Kemple is not worried about that.

"I think that they already assume people are smoking it. So I don't think they would care where it's being smoked at," said Kemple.

Senate Bill 639 would do more than just allow cannabis cafes. It would allow sales and consumption at fairs and concerts. It would allow home deliveries, and tours at licensed premises, so bringing the vineyard tour and tasting model to the cannabis farm.

also a retired public health nurse.

"We worked so hard to get the (Indoor Clean Air Act) and it's just really disheartening to think that we are going to backtrack," said Monnes Anderson.

But Monnes Anderson's concerns weren't limited to smoke. She argued that more research needs to be done on cannabis and its effect on pregnant women, brain development and other things before she'd support cannabis cafes.

The law is being sponsored by Oregon Health & Science University doctor Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward and Eugene prosecutor Sen. Floyd Prozanski. He says the bill will be good for people living in federal housing, for home deliveries and site tours of cannabis farms.

"It will, in fact, allow for retail to be done at special events," said Prozanski. "I believe it will help with the tourism, also cannabis lounges."

Turmoil

The cannabis industry is so new and in such turmoil that few people realized there is already a place where people get together to smoke cannabis.

It's called the NW Cannabis Club, and it's in southeast Portland.

Inside, it's like an old-school bar. Customers light up glass bongs in a variety of shapes. Music plays through a thick fug of smoke. Customers have to be over 21 and pay \$20 to become a lifetime member. They have to bring their own cannabis. Every time they visit, there's a \$5 fee.

Owner Mike Keysor said it's all legal because it's a private club.

"I was open prior to the changes in the Indoor Clean Air Act in this state," he said. "There were two other clubs open at the time. Those other two clubs succumbed to the pressure and closed. I did not."

Keysor said he has been cited several times for violating the Indoor Clean Air Act, but he believes the business is grandfathered.

Keysor is disgusted he's not allowed to sell alcohol or food, and that he can't have any gambling.

"Government needs to let people alone," said Keysor.

"You made it legal. You taxed the living crap out of it. Just let them smoke pot. Let them enjoy. A lot of our members are older folks. They paid their dues, they don't need to be harassed anymore."

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'I MEAN, I DEFINITELY THINK IT WOULD INCREASE OUR BUSINESS. PROBABLY MAYBE EVEN TRIPLE OR FIVE TIMES OUR BUSINESS.'

Sara Kemple | manager of The Dispensary, a cannabis shop in southeast Portland

"I mean, I definitely think it would increase our business. Probably maybe even triple or five times our business," she said.

Indoor air quality

Supporters are hoping to keep options open for businesses like The Dispensary on 52nd while responding to concerns about indoor air quality.

Sam Chapman, of the New Revenue Coalition, says the group is offering an amendment to Senate Bill 639, which would limit what customers could consume inside cafes to noncombustible products — like edibles and tinctures.

Chapman says they'd have to go outside to smoke. "It would be in an enclosed

Cafe proponent Chapman thinks opening up how cannabis can be sold and consumed would allow businesses to treat it like other successful craft industries.

"I think the other thing that this bill stands to do is increase tax revenue that is generated, right?" said Chapman.

"The state took in \$82 million of cannabis tax revenue last year."

In addition, the bill requires jurisdictions to "opt-in." So cities and counties that don't want any part of it, don't have to be part of it.

When the bill was discussed, before the recent amendment, the strongest opposition came from legislators like state Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, who's