

Commission votes for plastic education, rather than ban

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SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. — A “massive public education” program to decrease the use of disposable plastic containers may be headed your way.

On Wednesday, South Lake Tahoe's Sustainability Commission agreed to move forward with an education program designed to decrease the use of the containers, which include plastic bags, said Commission Chair Kirstin Cattell.

The commission will hold a special meeting at 4 p.m. on March 17 to receive public input and develop the education program. The meeting will be held in City Council Chambers at the Lake Tahoe Airport.

“There's a lot of ideas out there and we want to hear what people think and what is going to have a tangible impact,” Cattell said on Thursday.

Two other options being considered by the commission, a fee for using disposable plastic containers and an outright ban on the products, crossed treacherous legal ground, Cattell said.

Under California law, municipalities cannot legally impose a fee on stores for plastic bag use and imposing a fee on the customer themselves would be unwieldy, Cattell said.

Cities that have tried to implement plastic bag bans have faced successful legal challenges for not completing an Environmental Impact Report first.

The commission has “no interest” in setting the city up for a legal challenge, Cattell said.

“What we're trying to do is make an impact and hopefully what we're going to do is make an impact with this education campaign,” Cattell said.

The commission may still consider making a recommendation to the City Council to ban polystyrene use in the city and could take another look at how the city should regulate plastic bags if the education effort falls flat, Cattell said.

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