

The ban (single-use plastic bags) is banned (temporarily, we hope)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Climate Action Plan, Environment, Environmental Advisory Council, Serious Issues
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(The latest in a series of posts relating to the environment, Bethlehem's Climate Action Plan, and Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council)

Gadfly followers know that he loves the work of our Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), but their work on a proposed ban of single-use plastic bags has taken a bit of a hit.

Gov. Wolf Signs Provision In Budget Barring Banning Or Taxing Plastic Bags

Gov. Tom Wolf has signed legislation barring Pennsylvania's municipalities from taxing or banning the sale or distribution of plastic bags and other containers, wrappings, and bags.

A three-paragraph provision prohibits municipal bans or taxes on plastic bags or packaging for one year while legislative agencies study the economic and environmental impact.

Senate Republican Leader Jake Corman of Centre County says he wanted the provision because his district includes a plastics manufacturer and a township considering a fee on plastic bags.

Wolf in 2017 vetoed legislation preventing counties and municipalities from taxing or banning plastic bags.

Prime EAC mover of the ban Beth Behrend announced the bad news at City Council Tuesday night and recommended how the City should react. Both the Mayor and Councilman Reynolds — prime mover of the in-process City Climate Action Plan — also suggested courses of action.

Behrend explained that because of the legislative timing, the Governor had no other choice but to sign the budget, but that this 11th hour addition to the budget is being challenged. Behrend recommended that the City continue to move forward toward adopting the ban as going into effect July 1, 2020, when this legislative prohibition would cease (or earlier if it is successfully challenged).

In his prepared statement, the Mayor said, “I support the State’s plan to study the issue” and, in the opinion of the City Solicitor, “At this time an ordinance is not possible,” but that the City should state its position and go on record, and therefore he supports a City Council resolution “in the spirit of the EAC recommendations.”

Councilman Reynolds, ever optimistic and ever resourceful, pushed the Mayor beyond the resolution idea, urging the Administration to look at “other strategies,” for instance, working with the business and school communities — “there’s a different strategy and a different manner that should seriously be looked at.”

Good for CM Reynolds! If it’s a good idea, let’s move ahead. And not wait for the sometimes slow-motion of the legislative process.

It’s Thursday, July 18, do you know where your local Climate Action Plan is?