

Chamber asked to curb plastic shopping bag use

BY MARK LAYCOCK

Courier Staff

Carstairs Chamber of Commerce members are being encouraged to reduce their dependence on plastic bags in turn for more environmentally friendly cloth bags.

The proposal is the brainchild of the Carstairs Solid Waste Committee, which was formed in 2008 in response to concerns regarding biweekly garbage pickup, but has since moved its mandate to encouraging residents to reduce the amount of waste they send to the landfill.

The request to curb plastic bag use was brought before Carstairs Council on June 15 where councillors asked the waste committee to work with the chamber to approach retail businesses about switching to cloth bags.

Councillors felt the chamber should address the issue, rather than the town dictating business affairs.

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Waste committee mem-

ber Amber Nielsen, who brought the issue to the attention of the committee,

says reducing plastic bag use is beneficial for every-

one in the community, not just businesses.

"I was just thinking of ways as a committee that

we could make small progress and I guess being

more environmentally

aware, and I watched a

show on how San

Francisco decided to go

bagless and there are quite

a few communities that have decided to do that," says

AL MOLNAR
Councillor

Nielsen.

However, she feels that the matter should still be left up to each individual business.

"The ideal situation is that people decide for themselves that this is a better approach, and it's a more positive thing they can do for the environment because sometimes when it's enforced it can be hard for people."

"I feel really strongly that as an individual you can have a good impact on the world by making simple steps by using cloth bags as opposed to plastic."

The proposal was presented to chamber members at its monthly meeting last Wednesday. Chamber president Dennis Schnick says members at the meeting certainly warmed to the idea and are certainly interested in the proposal.

In the meantime, he says the chamber is investigating how to go about finding a source for cloth bags that can be used by all chamber businesses.

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Schnick, who is also the manager of Koch Fuels in Carstairs, says he would like to eliminate the bags from his store as well, but emphasizes the matter should be up to each individual business owner to decide.

Gord McKenzie, Carstairs Co-op branch manager, says the Co-op has been encouraging customers to switch to cloth bags for some time with the introduction of cloth bags at checkout

stands that can be purchased for 99 cents.

He adds that for the most part, customers have caught on to the idea and that more and more of them are bringing reusable bags.

Although there is no call for a ban on plastic bags in Carstairs, McKenzie says if such a proposal were to come before council at some point he would have no objections.

"I think eventually you will probably see everyone go to the recyclable bags, so yes, if the town decides to go that way we would support it fully."