

# South Portland takes 1st step toward bag fee

BY ALEX ACQUISTO  
THE FORECASTER

SOUTH PORTLAND — City councilors gave preliminary approval Wednesday to a 5-cent fee on single-use shopping bags and a ban on the use of polystyrene food containers.

The fee would apply to paper and plastic bags at any retail store that primarily sells food products. Only retailers whose sales of food or drink items are less than 2 percent of gross sales would be excluded.

The ban on containers made of plastic foam would only exclude establishments with incidental gross food sales of less than 2 percent.

The effort to curb the use of these materials comes on the coattails of Portland's decision to implement virtu-

ally the same rules, which went into effect in April.

In early August, councilors held a workshop on the issue and agreed that following in Portland's footsteps would be a good first step for the city.

It may be that South Portland eventually veers from Portland's path and limits the use of these materials even further, to the point of "total elimination," City Manager Jim Gailey said last week.

A possible route could be to have the single-use tax for one year and then an outright ban on plastic bags in year two, he said.

"As much as Portland did both paper and plastic, the real concern is the plastic (and) the end result of plastic in the environment," Gailey said.

The City Council's first reading of both proposed ordinances received unanimous support at the Sept. 9 meeting. They will be up for final approval on Sept. 21. If approved, both would go into effect in six months, on March 1, 2016.

Councilor Tom Blake unsuccessfully proposed an amendment to the single-use bag ordinance, which would have eliminated paper bags from the single-use category.

Paper bags are recyclable and can be reliably reused, Blake said. Moreover, paper bags can be viewed as a local product, made from Maine trees, he said.

"This is a reusable bag that is a Maine product that is made by a Maine employer. We have an opportunity to use a renewable re-

source," he said.

But Councilor Patti Smith said the point is to reduce, in addition to reuse and recycle.

"If you really believe in the three R's, some communities are actually adding a fourth R called responsibility: taking responsibility for your actions around environmental steps," Smith said.

She said she supports a single-use bag fee for both paper and plastic because it's a "step to take to address that first R: Reduce."

Adding a nickel fee for single-use bags and banning polystyrene are small, but meaningful steps, but "small matters do make a difference," Smith said. "It's up to everyone to think about what they do."

For the sake of consis-

ten- cy, Councilor Claude Morgan said, it's necessary to implement an ordinance similar to Portland's.

"In this narrow ordinance that we're working on tonight, we are in fact jumping in concert with a number of communities," he said.

The hope, Morgan added, is that other communities in the region will follow.

Fewer than half a dozen citizens offered comments. Two of them urged councilors not to take action.

Jim Hoy said he doesn't believe plastic bags are that big a problem, and frequent council critic Albert DiMillo called the councilors "a bunch of environmental hypocrites."

"You worry about environment. (But) why did we build a monstrous high

school? Because you don't think about the big picture, you think about little bags. You worry about the pennies and don't look at the big dollars," DiMillo said.

It isn't about turning a profit, Smith said. Rather, it's about providing an incentive for people to make small changes in their behavior that will hopefully lead to less refuse in the environment.

The 5-cent fee for bags would remain with retailers to use at their discretion, a detail that disappointed Blake.

He said he would rather see the fee used for "in-house programs, for education. I would like to see that happen, so that businesses look at it as an opportunity to improve themselves," he said.



The small and large of Portland's cruise ship industry: the 98-passenger Independence heads out to sea, on Sept. 5, while the 2,000-passenger Grandeur of the Seas is docked at the Ocean Gateway terminal.

## Portland's cruise ship season picks up

BY DAVID HARRY  
THE FORECASTER

PORTLAND — The city's ship is coming in.

Again, and again, and again, through early November.

Portland is expecting a very successful year for cruise ship visits, with 84 arrivals bringing as many as 97,000 passengers, according to city financial data.

Fees assessed per visit include a head tax and berthing, water, sewer, security and gangway fees. Data provided by Grondin estimates each visit can cost the city about \$1,200, in expenses, including providing security, a docking pilot, and operations staff at the Ocean Gateway and Portland Ocean terminals.

Once on land, cruise ship passengers can take bus trips to Freeport, Kennebunkport, Fort Williams in Cape Elizabeth, and Mt. Washington and the White Mountains in New Hampshire, all arranged by the cruise lines, Cruise Portland Maine Executive Director Bob Leeman said.

Ships stay in port an average of eight to 10 hours, Leeman said. An impact study commissioned by Cruise Portland Maine last year showed passengers on average spend \$100 per visit, but the spending is spread around the region.

"All the bus drivers, tour guides and buses are locally owned and employed," Leeman added. Old Port business owners

also keep tabs on arrivals, even if the economic impact of a visit may depend on how close a store is to the terminals.

"(Passengers) do spend a lot of time, and they spend a lot of money," said Sarah Weeks, who works at Ports of Call, a gift shop at 83 Commercial St.

The shop specializes in Maine-made goods, and Weeks said there are residual benefits from the cruise ship visits.

"I have a lot of people who come in during the summer who had been here on a cruise," she said.

Elena Morrow-Spitzer, proprietor of Maine's Pantry at 111 Commercial St., said her shop has been at its current location for seven years, and said she has seen business increase every year.

"I'm never going to complain about cruise ships coming, I think it's a good thing," she said Sept. 3.

Morrow-Spitzer said customers typically buy smaller items they can carry as gifts and souvenirs, rather than larger gift baskets.

But she also said city or cruise officials could do a better job educating passengers about what they can carry on board, including food in sealed and closed containers.

"We sell a huge amount of fudge, we just put it into sealed containers to abide by the rules," she said.

Weeks and Morrow-Spitzer said they keep track of the cruise-ship schedule,

as does Marie Stewart-Harmon of Lisa-Marie's Made in Maine at 35 Exchange St.

But Stewart-Harmon said it seems that the farther away from Commercial Street an Old Port business is, the less likely passengers are to wander in.

"It can be a really interesting creature," she said of the cruise ship trade. "(Exchange Street) is not so far and the street is beautiful."

Leeman said tour buses are now stopping at the corner of Union and Commercial streets when returning to Portland, so passengers can explore businesses while walking back to the ship.

Even on Commercial Street, Weeks said nothing is predictable.

"I can never predict from ship to ship and year to year," she said.

Stewart-Harmon said her store may get a bigger boost from customers on "leaf-peeper" bus tours.

Morrow-Spitzer agreed. "Six or seven buses in a day is like a cruise ship," she said. "Those people all get off and walk around."

Next year's cruise schedule is also pretty well set, with 74 arrivals and a potential capacity of 110,000 passengers. The increase in projected passengers is due in part to four expected visits by the Anthem of the Seas, with capacity of just under 5,000 passengers.

In total, Maine will get more than 400 cruise ship visits this year, a record high.

## Richardson won't seek council seat, may run for Senate

BY WALTER WUTHMANN  
THE FORECASTER

BRUNSWICK — Town Councilor and former state legislator John Richardson has decided not to seek reelection and may instead run next year for the state Senate.

Former council candidate Alison Harris, meanwhile, gathered enough last-minute signatures before the Sept. 4 filing deadline to run unopposed for Richardson's council seat.

Richardson, who has been an at-large councilor for three years, took out nomination papers, but confirmed last week that he has decided not to run again.

He said his decision came after discussions with his wife, Stephanie Grohs.

"We began to discuss the ability to work as I do, full-time, and to serve as a town councilor, especially with an upcoming new budget to be put together," Richardson said.

Another big factor "is my desire to run for the (District 24) state Senate seat — or to consider running," he said. "I would not be devoting as much time toward the council if running for state Senate. ... I can do two things well at once, but not all three. It would be unfair."

Richardson was a Democratic state representative from 1998 to 2006, and served as House Majority Leader and Speaker of the House.

In 2007, Gov. John Baldacci appointed him commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development, which he headed for two years.

He ran an unsuccessful campaign for the Democratic nomination for governor in 2010.

"I think that we're at a crucial point in time," Richardson said. "I believe that there's a need for experienced legislators. I've got the experience."

The Senate District 24 seat is held by Sen. Stan Gerzofsky, D-Brunswick, whose term limit expires in 2016.

Cumberland Street resident Harris said learning Richardson was considering not seeking reelection made her think about another campaign.

Harris unsuccessfully ran for the District 6 council seat in 2013, and said she has "continued to be interested in what's going on in town."

Harris and her husband moved to Topsham in 2007 from New Jersey, and then to Brunswick in 2009.

"We were both retired, and

we grew up and spent our professional lives in the New York area ... (and) decided we wanted a different lifestyle," she said.

Since then, Harris has been a volunteer at the Brunswick visitor center, and a strong supporter of the proposed Amtrak lay-over facility.

"I see how important the train is to Brunswick ... not only drawing visitors, but also bringing a lot of people from the region to Brunswick to meet people coming in or to take the train," she said.

Harris said she is a big supporter of the town's Comprehensive Plan, and wants to make sure the "intent" of the document is upheld in the ongoing rewrite of the town's zoning ordinance.

"(The Comprehensive Plan) is a very good document and it discusses very clearly the distinction between growth areas and rural areas that need to be preserved," she said.

Coming from New Jersey, which is "notorious" for its suburban sprawl, this planning is very important to her, Harris said.

Although she has never held elected office, she said that five years working for the state treasurer in New Jersey and her "many" years in the nonprofit sector before that prepared her to deal with questions of general services, development, and taxes.

### Incumbents

Districts 3 Councilor Suzan Wilson and District 4 Councilor John Perreault both returned papers for reelection bids.

Dan Ford of Ledgewood Drive initially returned papers with 103 signatures for Richardson's at-large seat — three more than the required minimum — but 13 of them were ruled invalid, according to Town Clerk Fran Smith. Ford will not be on the Nov. 3 ballot.

In the School Board election, District 4 board member Corinne Perreault and at-large board member Joy Prescott returned nomination papers.

In District 3, MacMillan Drive resident Teresa Kelly-Gillis is running unopposed to replace Chris McCarthy, who is stepping down because his wife was recently re-hired as an art teacher by the School Department.

## Zoning change needed for Cape Elizabeth village green

BY KATE GARDNER  
THE FORECASTER

CAPE ELIZABETH — A public hearing will be held Tuesday on a proposed zoning amendment for a village green.

The green and development of four mixed-use buildings is proposed at 326 Ocean House Road, south of Town Hall.

The Planning Board will hold a public hearing Sept. 15 to modify the maximum front-yard setback for vil-

lage greens in the Town Center District.

The amendment would create side and rear setback requirements of 15 feet, and 25 feet for front setbacks. The amendment wouldn't have a maximum front yard setback of 35 feet, which is a requirement of "all other uses" in the Town Center District.

The development works in part with the Town Center Plan, created in 1993, and its recommendation for the town to have a village green.

In 2012, the Town Council

assembled a new committee to update the plan and in an Oct. 2013 public forum, Peter Haffenreffer, the owner of the four-acre lot at 326 Ocean House Road, proposed the village green development.

Haffenreffer's plan was discussed throughout the following year and then worked into the updated Town Center Plan, which was adopted by the council in last October.

On May 11, the council referred the village green zoning amendment to the

Planning Board, which has been discussing it throughout the summer.

After next Tuesday's public hearing, the board will either forward the amendment to the council or decide to discuss it further. Once it goes to the council, it will be sent to the Ordinance Committee, which will review it and make adjustments. There will then be a council public hearing before the changes are approved or denied.

Although the develop-

ment is contingent upon the zoning amendment, the construction of the buildings is not, since the lot has been commercially zoned since the 1980s. Although Haffenreffer initially presented the plan, he is now selling the land to developer Harry Angevine.

The development includes one two-story building and three three-story buildings. The two-story building, which would be closest to the street, would have a restaurant on the first floor and

"multi-family dwelling units" on the second floor. The other three buildings would have offices on the bottom floor and residences on the upper floors. There would be a total of 17 residential units.

Without the village green, all the buildings would be pushed forward so they'd be closer to the road, with parking in the rear.

Either way, the developer would have to submit a site plan application and have the project approved.