

## Bangor officials exploring ban or fee on plastic shopping bags, Styrofoam in the city

BY NICK MCCREA  
BDN STAFF

BANGOR, Maine — Bangor officials are looking into whether the city should ban or charge a fee for plastic shopping bags.

Jay Dresser, a Bangor resident and past member of the city's recycling committee, brought the proposal to the city's Infrastructure Committee on Monday evening. He wants Bangor to ban the sale and distribution of plastic shopping bags and polystyrene (Styrofoam) containers.

Several Maine communities, mostly in the southern part of the state, have instituted fees or bans on plastic bags in recent years. In June, Freeport voters approved a townwide ban on disposable plastic shopping bags, but the change didn't take effect until September. They joined York, the first Maine community to pass such a ban, which took effect in March.

Many of these ordinances also include the ban on polystyrene containers. Brunswick passed a ban on Styrofoam food containers in March. That ordinance takes effect in October. Freeport and Portland's ordinances also include polystyrene containers.

More communities have established fees on plastic bags in hopes of swaying people to either use paper or bring their own reusable canvas or cotton bags from home.

Leaders in Portland, South Portland and Falmouth have all voted to establish a five-cent fee for every plastic bag consumers decide to take home from the store. Topsham also is considering a fee, according to The Forecaster.

"It's been going quite well," said Troy Moon, Portland's sustainability coordinator, during a phone interview Wednesday. "[Since the fee implementation] I've noticed a change of behavior, where the majority of shoppers are bringing their own bags."

In addition, clerks are



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY GABOR DEGRE/BDN  
**Blah The City of Bangor is exploring either a ban or fee on plastic shopping bags and polystyrene containers.**

now asking shoppers if they want bags for five cents, meaning shoppers leaving the store with just a couple items often don't bother with a bag at all, Moon said. In Portland, the five-cent fee stays with the store that gives out the bag.

"It's really not a revenue stream," Moon said, adding that the idea is to get people to think about bringing their own bags, not to raise funds.

Anecdotally, grocery stores and other retailers have reported sending far less plastic out the doors with their customers since establishing the fee.

Bangor city staff plan to reach out to communities that have instituted bans or fees to see how they have been received and what effects the changes have had. Most of these programs are still young.

"I think it's a commendable idea," said Bangor Councilor Gibran Graham. The councilors as a group wanted to learn more from other communities that have taken these steps before moving further.

After getting feedback, the city could craft an ordinance for consideration by

the City Council, or the decision could be made by voters at referendum, which is how some communities have approached the decision.

Dresser argued that in its role as the "gateway" to Acadia National Park and the north woods, Bangor should take a strong lead in the effort to reduce the use of these environmentally harmful products. Plastic bags and polystyrene containers never break down and are created using a limited, nonrenewable resource — petroleum.

Dresser suggested the ordinance could include language requiring retailers larger than 10,000 square feet to make reusable bags available to customers. He also recommended a year-long phase-in of the ordinance to allow time for public education and to give businesses a chance to prepare for the change.

Dresser also wants Brewer to consider a separate ordinance, but Brewer City Manager Steve Bost said in an email Wednesday that "we would not have any interest in his proposal."

Follow Nick McCrea on Twitter at @nmccrea213.

## Neely to lead Academic Transformation for One University Initiative

ORONO — University of Maine System Chancellor James H. Page announced earlier this month that Dr. Robert Neely has been appointed the new vice chancellor for academic affairs for the University of Maine System. Neely's marks the successful conclusion of a national search for an academic leader to expand access to public higher education to Maine learners of all ages, backgrounds, and locations and to collaboratively increase the capacity of Maine's public universities to serve critical state needs as part of the Academic Transformation occurring under the One University Initiative.

Neely comes to Maine's universities having devoted his career to public higher education as a biology professor, researcher, department chair, and an academic leader with 17 years experience navigating change in positions of increasing responsibility. For the last five years, Neely has served as the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Texas Woman's University, a public institution with three distinct campuses, more than 15,000 students, and nearly 140 undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs.

Earning high marks in TWU faculty surveys for excellence in leadership, integrity, and professional ethics, Neely has successfully guided strategic change initiatives across a multi-campus university recognized by the Chronicle of Higher Education in 2013 as the second fastest-growing public doctoral university in the United States.

"Working as one, Maine's universities have achieved national leadership around affordability, expanded access to our programs, and improved fiscal stability and our capacity to serve," said University of Maine System Chancellor James H. Page. "In Dr. Robert Neely, our search committee identified a proven academic leader with the experience and approach needed to transform

our academic programs into a truly statewide, strategically aligned portfolio.

The search process and essential duties for a new vice chancellor for academic affairs align with the One University Academic Transformation Initiative, characterized as "the most comprehensive change initiative ever attempted in state higher education," by Dr. Ellen Chaffe, a nationally-renowned expert in higher education leadership and governance.

Under Neely's leadership Maine's public universities will work collaboratively to expand access to learners of all ages, backgrounds, and locations while developing a strategic portfolio of academic programs that increases the capacity of public higher education to serve critical state needs and attract attention, resources, and talent to Maine.

"Creating new opportunities for academic collaboration among colleagues and across campuses will increase the capacity of Maine's public universities to inspire students and serve the state," said Neely. "As an academic leader with a track record of navigating faculty-engaged change across multiple campuses, I am grateful for the opportunity to join Maine's public university

leadership team."

"An accomplished scholar in biology, Dr. Neely understands that good data are needed to drive discussion, develop consensus, and create programs that create strategic opportunity for an institution and its students," said Jeffrey Hecker, executive vice president for academic affairs and provost at the University of Maine and a member of the VCAA Search Committee. "Dr. Neely also brings experience in working with first generation college students and a proven ability to improve student success and retention, both of which are well suited for a leadership role in public higher education in Maine."

Under Chancellor Page's One University Initiative Maine has become the only state in the country to achieve a five-year reduction in the real cost of public higher education while increasing investments in financial aid and improving the fiscal standing of Maine's universities. The emphasis on service to Maine and its students as one university has helped increase admissions activity while expanding early college access, credit transfer, and collaboration among the campuses.

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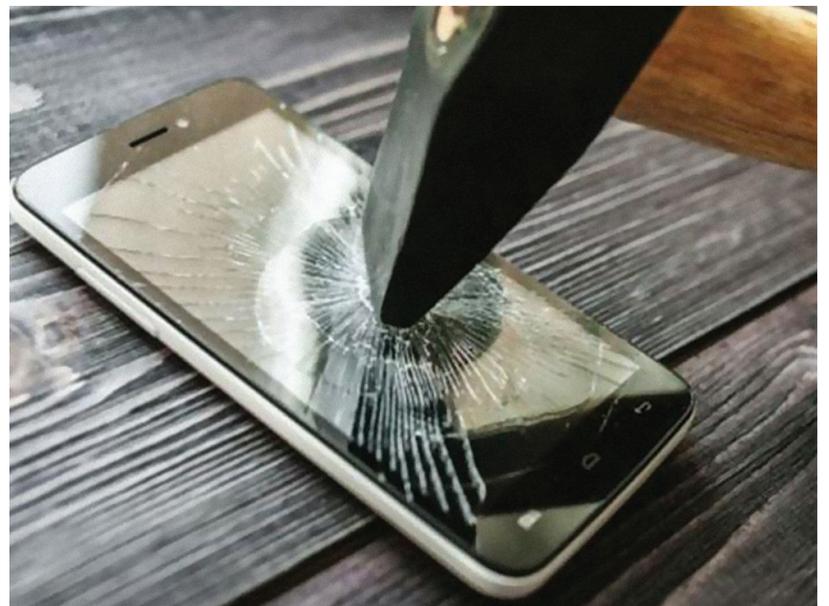


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