

**CITY OF NORWALK
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 18, 2018**

ATTENDANCE: Eloisa Melendez, Chair; Michael Corsello, Thomas Livingston, Chris Yerinides, Beth Siegelbaum

STAFF: Atty. Brian Candela, Corporation Counsel's Office.

OTHERS: Alexandra Hart, Asia Bentley, Mary Holten, Donna King, Kelly Calderon, Betty Ball, Jack Egan, Joe Schierlien, Dick Harris, Stephane Collett, Elsa Peterson Obuchowski, Diane Lauricella, William Roberts, Louise Washer, Mary Finnigan, David Buea, Kyle Baker, Roma Stibravy, Amy Callafron, Kathy Leeds, Stan Griffith, Ms. Jaeger, Andrew Colabella, Ms. Nicole, Johnnie Flynn, Stephen Bencover, Liz Milwe, Westport State Representative Jonathan Steinberg, Rodney Musick, Scott Jenner

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Melendez called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

She called the roll. A quorum was present.

**PUBLIC HEARING
(possible action on)**

- **Proposed revision to Chapter 74 – Recreation & Parks, Article 1**
- **Use of Carryout bags by Retail Establishment (Plastic Bags)**

Ms. Alexandra Hart came forward with Estay Bentley, Mary Holten who are members of a New Canaan High School environmental club to speak about the plastic bags. She said that a few weeks earlier the club members had gone to Pear Tree Point beach to do a beach clean up that removed 300 pounds of trash. One of the young ladies went on to informed the Committee members that that they removed 25-50 plastic fragments smaller than a quarter and 125-250 larger plastic fragments. She explained that the clean up occurred only a few days after the beach was cleaned. One of the students stated that the next generation wishes to save the environment.

Ms. Melendez thanked them for their comments. She said she had forgotten to let everyone know that they had three minutes to speak.

Ms. Donna King of Aiken Street came forward and said that she believed that everyone was present to protect the planet and particularly Long Island Sound. She then spoke about her experiences with shopping with re-useable bags both in Norwalk and Westport. Her bags are in her car and she has enjoyed using them. Westport adopted a plastic bag ban a few years ago and brown paper bags are available for those who do not have their own bags. At Whole Foods, they have brown paper bags available, but they will reduce your grocery bill by ten cents per bag that you bring. It's not a lot of money but it provides an incentive to bring your own bags. In Maryland, a grocery was charging fifteen cents per bag that they provide. She used her reusable bags, but it proved that Norwalk was not alone in making such changes.

Finally, while this may not fall into the category of legislation, but she would recommend that all retailers replace their plastic bags with paper bags with handles. She also encouraged the Committee to insure a reasonable lead time for retailers to re-tool in order to be in compliance before the ordinance takes effect. This is not a controversial change that is being contemplated. Ms. King said that she applauded the Committee for taking this important step.

Ms. Kelly Calderon of Elmwood Avenue in Norwalk then came forward to address the Committee. She said that she had graduated from the Norwalk Public School system and was currently attending NCC with the goal of becoming a nurse. This issue is very important because it affects future generations. It is necessary for everyone to have a role in this and participate.

Ms. Calderon said that she came from a single parent home and had to use public transportation. Because of this, the smartest option was re-usable bags. The plastic bags would rip. When she and her mother and sister went to Person To Person, they would bring their re-usage bags to bring the groceries home.

She said that she wanted to commend everyone for coming out today to support the plastic bag ban.

Ms. Betty Ball of Green Beech in Norwalk came forward to speak to the Committee. She thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak about the plastic shopping bags. Ms. Ball said that she has lived in Norwalk for about 30 years. As a member of "Skip the Plastic Norwalk" a group focused on raising the awareness of plastic in our environment, health and economy, she said that she supported an ordinance banning plastic check out bags and promoting re-usable bags.

She said the reason for the plastic bag ban was told by the numbers. Americans use 100 billion plastic bags a year, which requires 12 million barrels of oil to manufacture. The

Hartford Courant estimates that Connecticut uses 1 billion plastic bags each year, breaking that number down to Norwalk using approximately 30 million plastic bags a year. According to the EPA, when it rains, storm sewers and drainage overflows transport litter to rivers which eventually carry the plastic into waterways such as Long Island Sound. More than 100,000 plastic bags end up in Long Island Sound every year. Plastic bags take hundreds of years to degrade and don't break down completely but photo degrade into micro plastics, which absorb toxins and continue to pollute the environment.

In the Sounds and in the oceans around the world, micro plastics are ingested by marine life. According to Scientific American, these toxic micro plastics are entering our food chain. Another recent study found that 90% of table salt contains micro plastics. As of October 1st, Norwalk no longer accepts plastic bags for recycling in our blue bins. Plastic bags are used for an average of 12 minutes. Only 1% of the bags are ever returned to the certain drop off locations that recycle them.

With market such as China no longer accepting as much plastic from other countries, the impact is two fold. First of all, the market will have to pay more to have their recyclables carted away whereas before the recyclables were a source of revenue. Secondly, finding buyers for plastic bags to return the bags to retail outfits is becoming increasingly difficult. According to "Reuse this Bag.com" studies by two hundred cities and municipalities that have enacted this type of ordinance in the U.S. have benefited with a reduction of plastic bags in storm drains, rivers and residential areas; a reduction of plastic bags in both residential and commercial waste and savings through plastic processing fees.

Ms. Ball said that her group believes that Norwalk needs to be perceived as a progressive city noted for sustainability in order to attract people who want to live here. Stamford, Greenwich, Weston and Westport have all passed ordinances banning plastic check out bags. She said that her group believes that Norwalk needs to do the same in order to stay competitive. Over the course of a few months, nearly 1,500 Norwalk residents have signed a petition supporting a plastic bag ban in addition to 150 students that have signed it.

Ms. Ball concluded her remarks by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to speak about why a plastic bag ban in conjunction with promoting re-usable bags is in Norwalk's best interest.

Ms. Ball said that she had additional petitions to add to the ones that had been submitted.

Mr. Jack Egan of Bridge Street in Stamford came forward to speak to the Committee. He thanked the Committee for holding the hearing. Mr. Egan said that Norwalk has been fantastic with the level of openness and transparency and allowing the public to engage in dialog. Many of those in attendance have been to other towns and cities regarding this issue.

Mr. Egan said he was the volunteer chair of the Surefire Foundation. He said in order to make the strongest ordinance, his organization has found that having a minimum fee of .10¢ for plastic and paper is very important and secondly, setting the mill thickness at least 10.

This will help prevent loop holes. San Francisco and Hawaii both had ordinances which did not have fees. Later the ordinances were modified to include a .15¢ fee for plastic and paper. The fee is very important in changing behavior.

With the mill rate thickness, the ordinance should not create a loop hole, so Surefire is very cautious in supporting a 10 mill minimum because this results in the bags becoming thicker and thicker. He suggested including washable and re-usable bags. San Francisco has criteria for re-usable bags that include: the bag must be used 125 times, it must be able to carry 22 lbs. for 175 feet. Mr. Egan suggested that including the washable criteria would help because one can not wash plastic. This would encourage people to bring their own canvas totes.

Mr. Egan thanked the Committee for their time.

Mr. Joe Schierlien of Grandview Avenue came forward to address the Committee. He said that he was the Chairman of the Mayor's Water Quality Committee in Norwalk. He said that all the members of the Mayor's Water Quality Committee in Norwalk would like to express their support for the plastic bag ban. It will protect the Sound and it is a good thing that the City should do. The show Sixty Minutes had a program addressing this during the past week end and showed how bad things can get. Mr. Schierlien said that he has pulled plastic bags off of water valves, lobster traps, sail boat keels and motor boat engines. He thanked the Committee for their time.

Mr. Dick Harris came forward to address the Committee. He said that he had spent the last 30 odd years doing water quality work of various kinds and had a few observations for the Committee. The plastic bags were banned in Westport a number of years ago and the residents have adjusted to it. They bring their own bags or take paper bags.

Mr. Harris said that he wondered where the plastic bags went because they are stored separately at the dump and grocery stores collect them. Mr. Harris spoke to Jessica Paladino who manages the Norwalk recycling and found out that they can't recycle the bags because they gum up the machines, so the bags are burned. Mr. Harris said that for a one use item, that was not practical. He said that many times when people go to a store, various items are place in one plastic bag and then double bagged. Mr. Harris concluded his remarks by saying that he was totally in favor of the ordinance.

The next speaker was Stephane Collett of Red Barn Lane. Mr. Collett said that he was from France and moved to the U.S. in the 1990's. Growing up in France, he had never seen a plastic bag in a store. At Costco, they have a large bin of cardboard boxes and the

customers take what they need. His mother had a rolling bag that she used. He said that he was a plastic Nazi and just hates the plastic. He has shopped at Shoprite for the past 20 years and has seen people wrapping one lemon in two plastic bags. He uses net bags used to wash pantyhose as grocery bags. He said that he finds the double bagging and sometimes triple bagging that the clerks do makes him crazy.

Every year, he camps on Grassy Island with his family for two nights. The first thing his family does when they arrive is to pick up plastic bags and garbage so that when the island is cleaner when they leave it.

There is no reason for plastic bags anymore. He uses his canvas bags at Trader Joe's. They can be washed and used forever.

Ms. Elsa Peterson Obuchowski then came forward to address the Committee. She said that looking around the room, it doesn't appear that those present represents the population of Norwalk. She asked for a show of hands of those who did not have a car and had to use public transportation or walk to the grocery store. If someone has a car, it's very easy to store the re-usable bags in the car and have them handy when one stops at the store. However, if someone doesn't have a car, chances are that they have a low wage job without a desk or a locker to store their belongings at work. They also might have a boss that says don't bring stuff to work. For those people, they might need to stop at the store on their way home and if it's pouring rain, the canned goods, milk and juice will fall out of the paper bags before they get home.

Most of the people in this room are very compassionate people who would normally advocate for low income people and disadvantaged people in the community, but all of a sudden, when it comes to plastic bags, they have to pay an extra .15¢ to get a plastic bag. This is not right. It should be available upon request if the customer needs it.

Ms. Peterson Obuchowski said that she wanted to talk about reasonable solutions and referred to an article she had about the particular issue. Secondly, she was glad to hear the comments about plastic because in the stores, it's hard to buy items that were already encased in plastic. While there may be a choice about a lemon, there are many other items in the store that are pre-packaged and are encased in plastic. She mentioned that her husband bought a staple gun the previous week and the staple gun was encased in plastic. There needs to be a larger conversation about the use of plastic for items bought in the stores.

She said that the article was about a store that has started a no plastic section and the items are wrapped in waxed paper and other types of materials.

Ms. Diane Lauricella came forward and thanked the Committee for the time they spent doing research along with the newly formed group, Skip the Plastic, Norwalk. She said that she was present to urge the Committee to pass some form of the ordinance that is

currently before it. Ms. Ball and others will speak about the deluge of plastics that are used daily. This is a good step and the first of many for the future to make the City more sustainable and cost of the contamination in the trash collected as well as in the recycling bins. It is important to reduce that and Ms. Lauricella said that she hoped that one day, the City would look at zero waste efforts to try to reduce some of the materials.

Ms. Lauricella said that she wanted to ask the Committee to do more research on the use of the paper bags particularly as people are requesting that they have handles on them. The problem with those are they are much more expensive. As a waste management expert, the life cycle analysis of what a paper bag costs and the cost of making it, the process is very un-environmental. It could be a bridge bag as the City tries to urge people to utilize re-usable bags.

The issue of the low income residents that Ms. Obuchowski mentioned is something to think about. However, the reusable bags that can be donated by all of the various stores like Shoprite and others, are sturdier in the rain and on the bus. She said that it would be important to change people's habits, which is why she would like the Committee to consider adding a component, plan or policy for marketing and education to get people jazzed about this as quickly as possible. This will help all the businesses that fall under this ordinance. There needs to be clear signage that makes this idea sexy and fun to encourage people that this is one step, one small step.

Having the staff from Weights and Measures doing the check to make sure the regulated community is handling this properly is one step, but those staff members usually don't have an environmental background. Ms. Lauricella asked that either the Conservation Commission or the DPW Waste Management Coordinator, both of whom are well paid, would be the ones that help the City provide good education, along with marketing that is sexy. She thanked the Committee for their time.

Ms. Melendez called for the next speaker, Diane Keefe, who was not present.

Mr. William Roberts of South Main Street then came forward to address the Committee. He thanked the Committee and community for holding this hearing. He said that he was also going to mention the environmental impact of paper bags, which he was sure the Committee had researched. He said that he would like to read a bit from a research article called "An Exploratory Comparative Study on the Eco-impact of Paper and Plastic Bags."

The maximum amount of contribution made by paper bags on the impact categories such as carcinogens, respiratory organics, inorganics and climate change is attributed to the fact that these impact categories significantly depend on the amount of energy consumed. Since the amount of energy by paper bags is very much higher compared to plastic bags, these factors turn to be much higher in paper bags. The emphasis on the interpretation phase of this

analysis is not on concluding which one is better. Actually, the conclusion is to be drawn on how to reduce the environmental impacts by both of them. One of the possible ways to decipher this is by means of finding ways to reduce, reuse and recycle both of them. In fact, many retail stores have started utilizing the philosophy of reducing, recycling and using the grocery bags. Building up public awareness and motivation to reduce and reuse and recycle both of the bags would definitely help to resolve the environmental problems to a greater magnitude.”

Mr. Roberts said that he would like add his support to the previous speakers and encourage the Committee to find ways to engage the community in reducing all forms of things that have environmental impact.

Ms. Louise Washer was the next speaker who addressed the Committee. She said that she was a resident of Norwalk and also President of the Norwalk River Watershed Association. She thanked the Committee for holding this hearing and working hard on this issue. The Norwalk River Watershed Association does river clean ups and this year, the group removed almost 2,000 pounds of trash out of the river. The largest amount of that trash was single use plastic, which includes plastic grocery bags. This would be a great first step in raising awareness and changing people’s habits. She said that they need to carry around bags and get this stuff out of the waterways. She thanked the Committee for considering the ban and added that the Norwalk River Watershed Association would support a fee on paper, also.

Ms. Melendez called Ms. Mary Finnigan as the next speaker. Ms. Finnigan said that she was overwhelmed by the amount of plastic that we use in our daily lives. This is just the tip of the iceberg and the work needs to go every aspect of our society. She said that she had seen the Sixty Minutes segment and was blown away by it. Ms. Finnigan said that she had spent two years at sea working for NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) serving the Alaska coastline and Hawaii with a home port in Seattle. This was 30 years ago and this was not a problem then. Now it is far too late and the City needs to get going. Everyone needs to go down to the beaches twice year to clean up the plastic. There was a show at a art gallery in Greenwich where an artist brought in the plastics in conjunction with a clean up at Todd’s Point where over 4 tons of plastic was removed in under 4 hours.

Mr. David Buea of Westport came forward and said thanked the Committee for allowing him to speak. He said that he admired Westport when they got started years ago and the town often bragged that they were one of the best at recycling in the State. However, since then, they have stalled out in their efforts. He said that when he had heard Norwalk was taking this step, he was ecstatic and hope that Norwalk would put Westport to shame with not only the plastic, but the paper. He encouraged the Committee to charge .10¢ for the paper bags. He said that he was a cheapskate and felt it was a great thing. A reusable bag costs about \$2.50 and he’s got 40 or 50 bags in his car that he gives away to people. In France, everybody brings their own bags and packs their own purchases, so

they pollute less than we do. We need to do more. We can't just be volunteers, we need encouragement from the government. He said that it took him years to remember to get the bags and more years to get in to the habit of bringing the bags into the store. He said that he admired the Committee and would be willing to do anything to help them make this happen. He concluded his remarks by wishing the Committee luck.

Ms. Gillian Marshall was the next speaker called forward. She was not present.

Ms. Kyle Baker was the next speaker on the list. She came forward and said that she was not pleased when they took plastic bags off the recycling list in October because now her garage is filled with plastic bags that she has no idea what to do with. There are technologies but the plastic ends up in the landfills or end up in the ocean and this stuff does not break down for thousands of years. Micro plastic is a major issue that is threatening the quality of fresh caught seafood that eventually ends up in the food supply. One way to encourage bio-degradable as alternatives to plastic bags and reduce their use is to get more states and cities on board with the plastic bag ban. It will send a message to the companies to decrease the production of items that cause the most damage to our environment. This seems to be the most reasonable answer. Ms. Baker said that she stands in agreement with everyone else in favor of the ban and that everyone should work on making the recycling of plastic bags a bit easier.

Ms. Melendez said that Ms. Baker was the last name on the sign up sheet and asked if there was anyone else present who would like to speak.

Ms. Roma Stibravy, the President of UN NGO Sustainability, Inc. came forward and said that she done a special edition of their group's newsletter about outlawing plastic bags and the reasons for it during the past summer. It is major health issue because these miniscule pieces of plastic are now getting into the food supply. It kills turtles and whales, so will eventually kill us.

Ms. Stibravy said that she had a global perspective on the problem and two of the countries have outright plastic bags. These are among the poorest countries of the world and are located in Africa. One is Rwanda and the other is Kenya. She said that she would be happy to invite the ambassadors from either of those countries to come to explain how this was done. The people who are poor in the U.S. would be considered very rich in these countries, which are among the poorest in the world. They do not have electricity, and often have to go great distances to get water and wood for cooking. She also disagreed with the comment about people who travel on public transportation without bags by saying she bought a bag at Stop N Shop for a dollar and it is small enough to keep in a pocket or handbag. This is not an issue. The issue is whether they want to protect the planet or not.

Ms. Amy Callafron came forward and said that she does not live in Norwalk but shops in Norwalk a lot. As the co-chair of Weston's Sustainability group, they passed their Bring

Your Own ordinance in October of this year. It was re-ratified in November and December due to technicalities, but will go into effect in March. She thanked the Committee for considering this ordinance and it will have a big impact in Norwalk because Norwalk is a large city. She said that she would be happy to discuss their conclusions. The ordinance passed successful in Weston without objections from the businesses. There is a .10¢ charge on paper bags and they felt their needs were considered in terms of cost. Ms. Callafron said that she agreed with what Ms. Washer said about the paper bags being an intermediate step. A number of people on the committee are from Europe and this is a given there. She added that she has a market bag from France that she has been using for 25 years. When she goes to the grocery store here, people think it is her purse and tries to pack her groceries in plastic bags. There's a huge need for education. One step is to pass the ordinance but the other step is to make it sexy and get people involved, such as the cashiers and the people who work at the transfer station. There are solutions for the plastic bags, such as the WRAP program. It will be important to make this easier and get a lot of community spirit and involvement.

She added that Jamaica has recently banned plastic bags, Styrofoam and plastic straws. If entire countries can do this, the city can do this, too. People are leaving an environmental holocaust for their children. It is to remind everyone of the inconvenient truth that we can't keep doing business the way we have. This is an urgent thing and a very small step.

Ms. Callafron said that she applauded Norwalk for taking it and joining Westport, Weston and Greenwich in this effort.

Ms. Kathy Leeds from Norwalk came forward and said that she was President of the Rowayton Gardeners. She said that she was present to applaud the efforts of the Committee and that the Rowayton Gardeners support this ban. They are committed to environmental awareness and building it in the community. This has been a focus for a long time and they were glad to see this moving forward. Last month, there was a program about this in Rowayton and there were over 75 people for attendance. The online survey got a response of about 82%. She said that the Committee has their backing and would like to know how they could help.

Mr. Stan Griffin came forward and said that he was a long time resident of Norwalk. He said that he was impressed with the number of people that were present for the issue. There is an alternative disposal for those who have plastic bags. Both Stop N Shop and Walmart have bins for plastic bags disposal. He said that this ordinance would be a solution in search of a problem because there are solutions right now. He said that he knew many of the people saw the Sixty Minutes segment on plastics and that plastics are a tremendous problem. Having the ordinance approved would be like just cleaning a tiny corner of the room. He urged those present to talk to their legislators about creating state wide policies and laws to encourage plastic recycling. In the meantime, the individual localities passing ordinances does not make sense to him, particularly as there is tremendous cost involved for the merchants. In Weston, there are not that many

merchants, so people shop elsewhere. The fact that the ordinance has a .10¢ for those on food stamps shows that it is an expensive proposition for everyone associated with it. Mr. Griffin encouraged everyone to give this proposal some second thoughts.

Ms. Jaeger came forward and said that she has lived in Norwalk for 43 years. She said that she picks up trash in her neighborhood and has also done beach clean ups. Ms. Jaeger said that she picked up 7 pounds of plastic in Stamford in 2 hours. She added that a Styrofoam ban would also good. Her sister walks on the Fairfield beach every day and picks up garbage as she goes along. The beaches just have so much trash on them. Plastic bags are a good place to start and she suggested that Styrofoam might be a good next step.

Mr. Andrew Colabella, of Westport, came forward and explained that he works for the Department of Public Works. He said that he could vouch for Ms. Jaeger's diligence in picking up garbage. Mr. Colabella said that he was a Westport RTM District 4 Representative and was happy to see that Norwalk was also about to ban plastic bags. Norwalk has between 60,000 to 100,000 people residing in it at any given time and Mr. Colabella said that Norwalk uses a tremendous amount of plastic. He said that he was working on moving the plastic bag ban forward. Even though Norwalk is just one city, they are leading the rest of cities and towns to follow. Plastic bags can be brought in for disposal. This is a petroleum based product that take hundred of years to degrade. The only way to dispose of the bags are to burn them and Norwalk sends its garbage to Bridgeport's Resco plant for incineration. The energy that is released produces electricity. The smoke from that process turns into one ton of soot a year, which is amazing when most places in the United States are using land fills. The micro plastics are breaking up and mixing into the soil. No one knows how that will affect things. In the Dominican Republic they just removed 186 tons of plastic and waste from a beach. This is scary to think about since the plastics that were first produced in the 1950's are still around today. There are sixteen major pools of plastics in the world and the amount is increasing, but we have no place to put this. At the same time, we are using more and more. He said that as an RTM representative, he was considering how to change the environment but also wanted to benefit the suppliers. Right now he's working on a ban for single use plastics that would include Styrofoam and plastic straws, stirrers and plastic cups. It's when it is disposed of improperly that it becomes an issue. As a Norwalk City employee, the amount of garbage that he daily picks up is out of control. This is a major step forward. This is a great path and the first step in addressing a major issue.

A Norwalk resident named Nicole came forward next to share a story about how she grew up in a lower income family. Her mother would shop at PriceRight in Bridgeport and they charge people for plastic bags. Many of the customers use the cardboard boxes that the produce arrives in. Most of the customers there are lower income and they didn't use plastic bags. They would bring their own bags or use the cardboard boxes that were already there. So she didn't see this being a lower income problem because if people

know they are going to be charged for the bag, they will bring their own. This is a step in the right direction. Kids growing up will learn and they won't need a plastic bag.

Mr. Johnnie Flynn of Quintard Street came forward and said that banning plastic bags was a total waste of time. He said that there were 600 companies that dump tons of toxic waste into the Sound. Jim Himes, Bob Duff signed the bill and Chuck Schumer fought the bill. New York blames Connecticut for half the waste that pollutes Long Island Sound. He said that he was present speak about real issues, such as the fact that the oysters above the Walk Bridge have PCBs along with 17 other sites in Norwalk that are located in flood areas. There are 10,000 brown fields in Connecticut and 680 of them are located in Norwalk, 10 of them within blocks of Quintard Avenue. There's companies like Lajoie's, City Carting, F&G Cement Crushing. Mr. Flynn said that he had just filed a lawsuit about this because there were 280 asthma and/or cancer cases in Norwalk that are related to cement crushing.

Ms. Melendez said that while these comments were important, the public hearing was specifically about plastic bags.

Mr. Flynn said that they were 40 years behind France and 20 years behind Germany. Last week, Bridgeport passed a law to stop contractors from throwing lead and asbestos from buildings under demolition unless it is properly handled. There are construction projects all over the City that do not have permits.

Ms. Melendez asked how this pertained to plastic bags. Mr. Flynn said that while there were plastic bags in the Sound, they don't cause cancer or asthma. There is so much going on in Norwalk that The Hour will not print. People should get pitchforks and form an angry mob because spending money on plastic bags is a joke. Talking to Brian Candela is a waste of time.

Mr. Stephen Bencover came forward and said that he has lived in Norwalk since 1991. He grew up in Queens in the 50's and 60's before there were plastic shopping bags. The bags were paper and did not have handles. When he was sent to the grocery store, he'd come home with up to four grocery bags. While it wasn't fun, it worked. Mr. Bencover said that he has traveled all over the world and seen people in poorer countries with fish or dead chickens wrapped in newspaper and put into some kind of container to carry it home. These people carried their parcels onto buses in great heat and people who think it is wrong to deny the poor people use of plastic bags are not using their smartest brain cells. You can't project the hardship of doing without a plastic bag to the hardships that people all over the world have faced without plastic bags for many, many years. He pointed out that the meat in the stores is packaged on a Styrofoam tray wrapped in plastic wrap, which is then put in another plastic bag to prevent the blood from leaking out. Then that is put in another plastic bag with the other groceries that are also wrapped in plastic. It doesn't make sense. There are many problems, such as single use, disposal bottled water. Someone had the great idea of charging a \$1.00 for a bottle of water and

now everyone walks through the streets with bottles of water. When they are done with the water, they toss the bottle in the trash. Mr. Bencover said that while he appreciates the fact that the Committee is having this hearing to discuss the problem, he thinks it would be a wonderful first step to make Norwalk a more progressive city.

Ms. Liz Milwe came forward and said that she was one of the four people who helped sponsor the ban on plastic bags in Westport ten years ago. Many people asked why they didn't have a fee on the paper, but she explained that they never discussed it. They did consider a tax, but that is not allowed. The discussion then was about whether or not plastics were dangerous at all. There has been such an incredible change in education over the last ten years. It's so great to be here and see this. If the Westport ban was being done now, Ms. Milwe said that she would have a fee on paper at point of purchase so that Peapod and other companies couldn't come in with plastic bags.

There are retail stores in Weston and there are many people who live there. The plastic bag movement is really about changing behavior for the children and the future generations. This is about changing a small habit for the betterment of everyone.

State Representative Jonathan Steinberg of Westport came forward and said that he was on the RTM ten years ago when Ms. Milwe and the others introduced the plastic bag ban in Westport. There was a lot of resistance and people said that it could not be done. The petroleum industry was dead set against it and the grocery industry was also against it. It's hard at first. Representative Steinberg said that in the beginning, he forgot the bags, but over time, it became second nature. It can be done. The issue about whether people should be penalized for using paper is arguable, but if it helps promote the transition, it is probably worthwhile. Representative Steinberg said that there have been attempts at a State wide ban and the resistance from the lobbyists has been significant. They will try again with plastic bags, and plastic straws.

The argument that Representative Steinberg finds hardest to understand is that one city can't do very much. This is the argument that has been going on for too many years and why the world is where it is today. If every town and city, community and State and country does what needs to be done, it will address the issues of pollution and climate change. It's not all of us because this started off as a grass roots effort.

Representative Steinberg said that he was proud that Norwalk was willing to stand up and take responsibility for its use of disposal products. Last of all, he said that manufacturers need to stand up and take responsibility for the entire life cycle of their products. They should be designing products including clamshells and other packaging with full consideration of how they will be responsible for disposing of those items and making sure they are biodegradable. That's a bigger mission for another day, but this is a good first step.

Mr. Rodney Musick, a Roton Middle School student, came forward and said that he came to listen to the discussion about the use of plastic bags. Several people talked about generations and getting into the habit of reusable bags for the future. Mr. Musick said that they could start now by getting the students involved and reaching out to them. They could start right now.

Mr. Scott Jenner came forward and said that he has lived in Norwalk for six years or so. The discussion has been about the impact right here on Long Island Sound. He and his wife have sailed around the world twice in small sailboats. The amount of plastic garbage that they have seen during their travels in the middle of the Pacific Ocean is incredible. There was one island and inside of the reef, the beach was pristine white. But when they moved out to the ocean, there was plastic garbage all over the sand. This is not just a Connecticut or Long Island Sound problem. It is a world wide problem. It is important to start somewhere and even if just a few people stop using plastic bags, then it will start to change their lifestyle. Then others will start doing the same thing. After a while, hopefully, everyone will be able to save the world.

Ms. Melendez asked if there was anyone else present who wished to speak. Hearing none, she closed the public hearing on plastic bags at 8:13 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING DISCUSSION

Proposed revision to Chapter 74 – Recreation & Parks, Article 1

Ms. Melendez announced that the first discussion would be on the Proposed revision to Chapter 74 – Recreation & Parks, Article 1. She asked if there were any comments or motions from the Committee.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO SUBMIT THE PROPOSED REVISION TO CHAPTER 74 – RECREATION & PARKS, ARTICLE 1 TO THE FULL COMMON COUNCIL AT THEIR NEXT MEETING.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Use of Carryout bags by Retail Establishment (Plastic Bags)

Mr. Livingston said that he had a few points that he would like to clarify. First of all, regarding the low income individuals, arrangements have been made with the Mayor's Office to provide re-usable bags around the City such as the Norwalk Housing Authority and the Senior Center. He added that there would be a six month delay between the approval of the ordinance and the actual start date. This will be an opportunity to educate people and help them become aware of the change.

Ms. Melendez then spoke about the effect on the low income residents and said that Norwalk was a very diverse City. People who use public transportation need to be

considered. She said that the members of her family that use public transportation actually use re-usable bags because they are reliable and they have been using them for years. This is an ordinance that is being considered by the elected officials and they keep everyone in mind when they craft the proposal. However, if something doesn't work, the issue can be revisited. It is not set in stone. The point is to change of behavior. That was always Ms. Melendez's first thought when it comes to this issue and public transportation.

Mr. Livingston said that after the last meeting he had heard from the Health Department and they would rather not be the agency responsible for enforcing this. He said that there was a suggestion to change Section 6A from stating that it would be enforced by the Health Department to being enforced by the Code Enforcement Office. Mr. Livingston said that he checked with Mr. Ireland about this.

Atty. Candela said that he had spoken with Mr. Ireland and that Mr. Ireland indicated that his department would be able to do this. Mr. Ireland also indicated that he understood that this was not an intent to penalize but to change lifestyle.

Mr. Livingston said that he would like to propose this amendment to the item. Ms. Melendez said that they should keep a running list and then make all the changes at once.

Mr. Corsello said that he enjoyed the public comment. This is the third time that the Committee has considered this item and it is time to move forward.

Mr. Corsello said that he had a change for 6D. In the body of the ordinance, it requires retailers to post a sign indicating that if the customers desired to use plastic bags, they would be available at a cost not to exceed .10¢ but then in clause 6D, it states that there will be no penalty if the retailers fail to comply with that aspect of the ordinance. He reminded everyone that the goal was not to penalize people, but to change habits. Having the sign prominently displayed at the check out, it will further educate the public. If the retailer ignore the ordinance then they should be subject to the fine.

Ms. Melendez pointed out that the charge would be for paper bags. She said she actually tended to agree with Mr. Corsello and already bring her own bags. People who work at the retail establishment automatically bag the items.

Mr. Corsello said he thought that this was a major component of the ordinance. Mr. Livingston said that he was the one that included the language and it was based on a New York City statute. He said that he was not opposed to removing that at all.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO AMEND THE ORDINANCE WITH THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENTS:**

• AMEND SECTION 6A TO CHANGE THE REFERENCE TO THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO THE CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER; AND

• TO DELETE CLAUSE 6D.

**** THE MOTION TO AMEND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO FORWARD THE ORDINANCE TO THE FULL COMMON COUNCIL AS AMENDED FOR THE FIRST MEETING IN JANUARY.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Melendez said that for those who might be interested in this issue, the Common Council meets each month in the Common Council Chamber on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. The next Council meeting will on January 8th. The vote will be taken at that time.

Mr. Yerinides left the meeting.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

• November 20, 2018 – Ordinance Committee Regular Meeting

**** MR. CORSELLO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 20, 2018 ORDINANCE COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 20, 2018 ORDINANCE COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

• November 28, 2018 – Ordinance Committee Special Meeting

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 28, 2018 – ORDINANCE COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 28, 2018 – ORDINANCE COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OLD BUSINESS

Innovation District.

(Tabled until January 15, 2019)

**** MR. CORSELLO MOVED TO TABLE THE ITEM REGARDING THE INNOVATION DISTRICT TO THE JANUARY 15, 2019 MEETING.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEW BUSINESS

Code of Ethics and Citizen's Guide to the Code of Ethics.

A brief discussion took place about the need to include the Council Members in the language of the code. Mr. Corsello and Mr. Livingston recommended adding the words "or the public" to the proposal.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services