

Anyone who has seen the report on the plastic "continent" the size of Texas in the Pacific Ocean (Nova program) will understand the urgency of this proposal by all the 'Greening of Ct. and beyond' groups and recognize that it is the mandate of all corporate entities to serve the global communities they impact ~~\*and not just~~ their own unlimited expansion; Moreover, any forward thinking CEO will see tremendous opportunity in the newly emerging market for recyclable materials. I spent money and time this week locating and stocking up on biodegradable garbage disposal bags to replace the plastic ones I was in the habit of using. I found some in CVS as well as whole foods. The prices will come down in accordance with demand and if large chain stores are smart, they will spend the former bag budget on this new variety of environmentally healthy give or sell product both for making and saving money in their operation. It's time for our 'feel good' quotient to rise in direct proportion to the good we see ourselves doing daily. This is what people want, and awareness of what people want has always been good for business. Why prolong into an uncertain, wasteful and dangerous future the mistakes of yesterday.

Urgently and respectfully, Sophie Barnes, Westport, Ct.

[courant.com/news/opinion/editorials/hc-plastic.artsep15,0,6544834.story](http://courant.com/news/opinion/editorials/hc-plastic.artsep15,0,6544834.story)

## Courant.com

### Ditching The Plastic

September 15, 2008

Westport put itself far ahead of the curve this month, becoming one of the first municipalities on the East Coast to bar local stores from using plastic shopping bags.

[Click to Listen](#)

Westport's ordinance goes into effect in six months and includes a \$150 fine for stores that offer the bags. We admire the chutzpah.

The use of these bags has become deeply ingrained in commercial transactions. (Remember when cashiers used to ask, "Paper or plastic?") What a waste.

ONLINE  
BACK-UP  
AND RECOVERY.

Only 1 percent ever get used again. Most end up in the waste stream. In Connecticut, that means going up in smoke at some regional trash-to-energy incinerator.

In landfills, these bags can take hundreds of years to decompose. Others end up in unsightly snags on tree limbs, or worse, floating off into the ocean where they can suffocate marine life.

These bags are a symbol of our wasteful throwaway society. Considering petroleum and natural gas are key ingredients in the plastic, they're the kind of waste America ought to be especially vigilant about now and in the future.

By adopting this law, Westport town officials have taken a stand against a destructive status quo and encouraged others to do the same.

But why wait for a law? Shoppers can do the right thing right now by buying cloth shopping bags and using them instead. It's a small change, but it's the kind of thing we need a lot more of.

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December 3, 2007

EDITORIAL

## A Bag Problem Blossoms

Now that the leaves have finally fallen, a new decoration becomes more visible on the nation's many deciduous trees: those plastic bags that float high into tree limbs and flutter noisily with each autumn breeze. Despite this unappealing vision, a ban of all plastic bags would be hard to champion, although the earth would be a greener and healthier place without them. What this unsightly airborne litter does offer is an opportunity for industry and consumers to think a lot harder about how much such convenience is costing the planet.

Plastic bags are as much or more trouble than they are useful. Up to 100 billion are used each year in this country, and they make bringing groceries home (or even protecting a newspaper from rain) so easy. But they also choke wildlife, create litter and overload dumps for generations to come. It also takes 12 million barrels of oil to make a year's supply.

The plastic bag, like the plastic water bottle, has plagued environmentalists for years but has only recently worried consumers. It may be that the fear of global warming is now so, well, global that people are trying to do their bit by subtracting from the earth's garbage load.

Whatever the cause, lawmakers across the country are proposing bans on plastic bags or ordering up studies. The most dramatic action has come in San Francisco, where a voluntary recycling program for plastic bags turned out to be a dud (less than 5 percent were recycled). So the city banned plastic bags in large grocery stores last month and in large pharmacies by April. It may take some time to figure out whether this effort really works. At best, the industry could find a way to make better bags that only last for a while.

Already the market is responding to this public worry. Some stores are giving discounts or rewards for shoppers who bring their own bags. Others charge for each bag a customer uses. Many stores provide recycling bins for their plastic bags, although in most cases they are about as easy to spot as the discount cereals.

## WestportMinuteman.com

09/04/2008

### RTM passes ban on plastic bags

By:Bonnie Adler , Staff Writer

The Representative Town Meeting approved a ban on plastic bags in supermarkets and retail stores in Westport in a 29 to 5 vote late Tuesday night, thus establishing Westport as the first town on the East Coast to approve such an ordinance.

The ordinance, which favors the use of reusable checkout bags in order to improve the environment in Westport, passed relatively easily, with a host of residents expressing their support of the measure.

The RTM voted against passing the ordinance with a sunset clause, which would have required that the legislation expire in one year unless reapproved by the RTM.

The ordinance carries with it a fine of \$150 for stores that are not in compliance, and would be monitored by the Conservation Commission, not the police department.

The ordinance was sponsored by four RTM members from District Four, Jonathan Cunitz, Liz Milwe, Gene Seidman and Jeffrey Weiser, all of whom laid the groundwork over the past year, and held numerous meetings with public officials, retailers and residents to gain their support. They found no significant opposition from retailers, and were supported by local officials.

During his slide presentation, Cunitz explained that people were not being denied the right to use plastic bags, but that merchants, particularly supermarkets and drugs stores, would no longer be able to give them away for free. To justify the new ordinance, the group has stated, "Non-biodegradable plastic bags often are discarded into the environment and end up polluting our waterways, clogging sewers, endangering marine life and causing unsightly litter. The bags last hundreds of years in landfills and are a potential source of harmful chemicals when they do break down."

Efforts to create voluntary recycling of plastic bags have failed, they said.

The ordinance is also in conformity with the Town Plan of Conservation and Development, which aims to preserve and enhance the quality of the environment, Cunitz said.

The group modeled the proposed ordinance after one which has been adopted in San Francisco, Calif., where a ban extending to grocery and drug stores has been quite successful. One also exists in Malibu, Calif.

Cunitz noted that some citizens object to restrictions because they are reluctant to change their behaviors. He pointed out that laws that require seat belt use or restrict cell phone use have been hugely successful, despite concerns that they were too invasive.

The ordinance requires a six-month outreach and education program before it becomes operative. RTM members of District Four have pledged to educate the town about the ordinance, "which is not about plastic vs. paper, but plastic vs. reusable bags," said Cunitz. "Paper bags will disappear later."

According to a representative from the Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Westport is the first town east of the Mississippi to impose such an ordinance.

The ordinance was previously approved unanimously by both the ordinance committee of the RTM and the Environment Committee. Kevin Green of District 9 presented the report from the environment committee saying, "This is not an infringement of peoples rights - banning non-biodegradable plastic bags is a reduction of convenience, not of rights."

First Selectman Gordon Joseloff heartily endorsed the ordinance at the RTM meeting but warned that there might be some cost to the town given the possibility of litigation. He added, "There is a Westport factor. Westport is different from other places. If it works here, the message to other places will be 'you can do it too.'" He suggested that local supermarkets give away the reusable bags and sell the advertising space on the bags to advertisers to pay for them.

Former selectman Carl Leaman supported the ordinance, saying that the Green Energy Task Force in Westport, which he leads, had studied and supported the ordinance.

David Pogue of Westport, technology columnist for the New York Times, said people who opposed the ordinance just because they didn't want to carry reusable bags in the back of their cars were "really sad." He got the group laughing saying, "How do we think of the leaders of the 1940s and 50s? We see them as clueless and naïve. They smoked, did not wear seat belts. They used DDT. We know the facts, so don't let our kids and grandkids look at us as the idiots who did nothing. Besides, if you pass this ban, I'll write about it in the Times."

The ordinance was opposed by Tom Rosario, a lobbyist from the American Chemical Council, which represents the plastics industry, and by Stan Sorkin, executive director of the Connecticut Food Association who preferred an education campaign and a plastic bag recycling law.

One resident said, "We'll be in People magazine as the town that really started it."

Liz Milwe, one of the sponsors of the ordinance said, "This ordinance is about communities making a difference."

# AROUND CONNECTICUT

## ANTI-LITTER

# Westport First in State To Ban Plastic Bags

By WENDY CARLSON

**WESTPORT** LAST year, San Francisco banned non-biodegradable plastic bags in its large grocery stores and pharmacies. Soon, Oakland and Los Angeles followed. Now, Westport has joined their ranks, becoming the only town in Connecticut to ban most plastic shopping bags.

Beginning March 2009, retailers who use plastic bags, with some exceptions including those for produce, will be fined \$150.

In this high-toned town with its handsome pedestrian shopping district lined with designer boutiques and gourmet food shops, a nonplastic mindset is already *de rigueur*, even before a ban was discussed. Downtown merchants package purchases in colorful reusable bags or decorative paper alternatives. Trader Joe's and Whole Foods give customers recyclable paper bags and sell reusable bags. Shaw's and the Stop & Shop also provide recycle bins for them.

"Westport is well known for being progressive, and in the forefront of social issues," said Gordon Joseloff, a first selectman, noting that it was one of the first communities to pass a resolution opposing the Vietnam War. So it was not surprising when the or-

dinance was passed 26 to 5 at a representative town meeting.

The vote came in spite of lobbying by representatives of the chemical industry and supermarket chains who said that paper bags are more costly to produce and release methane gas when decomposing.

Stew Leonard Jr., president and chief executive of the Stew Leonard's chain, who also is a Westport native, said a ban would get "more of a backlash in larger towns with more businesses."

"I'm opposed to it because I don't think it's better for the environment," he said. "It takes one trailer to deliver a load of plastic bags compared to six trailers to deliver the same number of paper bags."

Other cities like New Haven and Madison have considered a similar ban, but the proposals have gone nowhere so far. Al Goldberger, first selectman of Madison, said he agreed that the bags should be banned, but in spite of much talk about it, "right now, there's no official town initiative under way."

In New Haven, Roland Lerner, an alderman, helped devise a plastic bag ordinance last year that the City Council rejected. He said he plans to present a revised draft in November that will try to balance the needs of business owners



PHOTOGRAPHS BY WENDY CARLSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

with the environment.

"This is not just about forcing people to use reusable bags because we're a bunch of tree-huggers, but because we recognize there are numerous negative impacts that plastic bags have on the city in terms of litter," he said.

In other communities, officials say the dilemma is not right. "I don't think it would fly in Norwalk," said Eve Rothbard, who owns Liberty Army and Navy with stores in Westport and in Norwalk. "There are just too many commercial businesses there."

Kim Fawcett, state representative for

**HART BREAKING**  
Left, Kim Fawcett uses reusable shopping bags. Far left, Mitchell Weber is switching to paper bags in her chocolate shop.

have to hurt business. "I think it's going to start a domino effect. Westport is one of the first dominos to fall. I know towns in the region looking at this issue," said Emmet Pepper, the Hudson Valley program director of the Citizens Campaign for the Environment, a grassroots organization with more than 80,000 members in Connecticut and New York. "By Westport taking the step, it shows them it can be done."

Mr. Joseloff, the Westport selectman, said the ordinance is not about paper versus plastic but about encouraging people to use reusable bags.

Lisa Grosso, 29, of Fairfield who was loading a half-dozen plastic bags of groceries into her car in the Stop & Shop parking lot in Westport recently, said choosing plastic was a habit.

"I use them for so many other things," she said. "So if Fairfield passed a ban on plastic, I'd be a little disappointed." But shrugging, she added, "I'll just have to start remembering to bring those reusable bags with me to the store."

# WestportMinuteman.com

01/15/2009

## Plastic bag designs to be announced

By: Bonnie Adler, Staff Writer

The winners of a town-wide contest for a design for Westport's first reusable bag will be announced today at Town Hall at 4 p.m. in Room 309. First Selectman Gordon Joseloff and several town officials will be present to celebrate the announcement heralding Westport's environmentally responsible shopping bag.

Two of the winning designs will be imprinted on a 16 inch by 14 inch reusable bag intended to replace plastic bags used at checkout counters throughout Westport when the ubiquitous lightweight plastic bags used in supermarkets and retail stores will become illegal on March 19 as Westport's new ordinance banning plastic bags becomes effective.

According to Gene Seidman, an RTM member from District 4 and one of the original sponsors of the new ordinance, the town-wide response to the design contest was enthusiastic and overwhelming.

"More than 140 entries were submitted by students and adults," said Seidman. "We feel we have fully engaged the town in a meaningful way as we go about educating people about the ordinance and the need to use reusable bags instead of plastic bags when they go shopping."

Entries for the contest were submitted by elementary, middle and high school students as well as adults. Fifteen finalists were selected by an eight-member jury in Westport last month, and the designs were displayed at HSBC in Westport last week.

Seidman said he was thrilled that so many students in elementary, middle and high school had submitted entries. "Several art teachers embraced the concept and made it a class project. Over half were submitted from kids in the category of kindergarten through eighth grade. The entries were wonderful," said Seidman. One design created by a student in the kindergarten through eighth grade category will be imprinted on a reusable lunch bag intended for students to use to bring their lunch to school.

The design contest was conducted with the assistance of a jury chairperson, Liz Rueven, former co-chair of the Westport Arts Center Visual Arts Committee. A diverse jury was assembled consisting of Seidman, a marketing executive; Maura Frana, a Visual Arts Assistant of the Westport Arts Center; retailer Shirley Mellor of Max's Art Supplies; Nate Paulson, manager of Patagonia; Angela Simpson, a Staples High School art teacher; Sandi Fifield, a fine art photographer; and AJ Kiefer, a Staples High School student. The jury met to review all the entries and select the finalists and the winners. According to Chairperson Liz Rueven, "There were so many exceptional designs that selecting the finalists and winners was a real challenge. We were extremely impressed by the creative interpretations and responses to the call for bag designs."

Next month, the 15 finalists' designs will be displayed at Max's Art Supplies and on Tuesday, March 17, two days before the ban takes effect, all the entries will be displayed in the Westport Public Library.

The bags have been sponsored by the Westport Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Merchants Association as well as Town Fair Tire. In the weeks ahead, the bags will be available for sale at different merchants throughout the town.

Westport is one of the first towns on the East Coast to ban the use of plastic shopping bags at the checkout counter. Retailers may switch to paper bags, but the intent of the ban is to encourage residents to switch to reusable bags. The ordinance passed in September with very little opposition and required a six-month lead time during which sponsors were required to educate residents and store owners about the ban.

# WestportMinuteman.com

01/22/2009

## Winners named in bag design contest

By: Bonnie Adler, Staff Writer

Many times public meetings can be, to be honest, a bit boring, what with all those dry details and pressing problems. But this time, meeting in Room 309 at Town Hall was anything but, as lots of kids, grownups and pleased elected officials had good news aplenty to share.

The happy occasion was the announcement of the three winners of a town-wide design contest for Westport's first environmentally correct reusable bag, intended as one way to permanently replace the lightweight plastic bags given out by the thousands each day at Westport's retail checkout counters, soon to become a thing of the past when Westport's ban on plastic bags goes into effect on March 19.

The contest winners were picked from 15 finalists from three categories which included an adult, a high school student and an elementary school student. First Selectman Gordon Joseloff announced the winners, saying he was proud of the role the RTM played in initiating and passing the new ordinance.

Regional interest in the initiative is growing, said Joseloff, indicating that town officials in Wilton had expressed an interest in Westport's new efforts and may soon initiate an ordinance of their own.

Jonathan Kunitz, an RTM member and one of four District Four sponsors of the ordinance, said he had received numerous inquiries, some from as far away as Portland, Oregon.

The winners of the contest were Sandy Schulze in the adult category, Ross Gendels in the Staples High School category and Anna Daytz in the K-8 category.

Paradoxically, Sandy Neva Schulze, a graphic artist from Stamford, received the news of her win on the same day she found out she was let go of her job as a graphic artist in Stamford. Schulze, who intends to become an independent designer in her own company, said she designed her entry in half an hour on Adobe Illustrator. Schulze's design features a stylized tree with leaves formed by various sized dots in several shade of green forming each of the continents in the world. Schulz learned about the contest from Sheri McMahon, a Westport friend who is her partner in her new business.

Ross Gendels, a Staples High School senior, created a design with 11 thin brown trees with geometric shapes in the background in several shapes and colors. He used Adobe Illustrator and said his design took him two days to create. Gendels is on his way to art school in the fall and has already received placement in two schools he is pleased with.

Anna Daytz, aged 10, designed her entry the old fashioned way. She hand-illustrated her idea, which has BYO Bag in large multi-colored letters with the phrase "reduce reuse recycle" in a circular pattern in the middle. She was very happy to win, and careful to give credit to a friend who suggested using a global theme in the lettering.

The winners were selected from a total of 141 entries, over half of which were from students in Westport schools. The concept had been embraced by many of Westport's art teachers and several classes were asked to submit entries as a school project.

Winners were selected by a jury of eight Westporters, who first whittled the 141 entries to 15 finalists whose work was shown several weeks ago at HSBC in Westport. Designs will be shown at Max's Art Supplies in February and at the Westport Public Library in March. The bags will be sponsored by the Westport Chamber of Commerce and Town Fair Tires and will be distributed to retailers throughout Westport for use when the ban begins.

Plastic bags will soon be illegal, as Westport's historic ban on retailers use of plastic bags goes into effect on March 19. While paper bags will be an acceptable alternative, the ban is really intended to encourage the use of recyclable bags, and the aforementioned contest was held to entice the public to get involved early in the six-month education stage and create artwork for Westport's first reusable bag, one that will be 14" x 16" in size, will fold up to an unimaginably tiny little package when empty, and best of all, will sport a green themed BYO Bag logo with Westport's name emblazoned proudly on it.

# WestportMinuteman.com

01/29/2009

## Reusable bags proposed statewide

By: , Editorial Board

Fairfield and Westport leaders are playing key roles in an effort to turn Connecticut into a "green" state with regard to the use of reusable bags in retail stores.

Westport is one of the first towns on the East Coast to ban the use of plastic bags at the shopping counter. An ordinance takes effect next month that would carry fines for stores that fail to comply.

Residents expressed virtually no opposition at public hearings on the proposed ordinance last September, and last week, the town announced winners of a contest for designs of Westport's first reusable bags.

Two of the winning designs will be imprinted on 16x14-inch reusable cloth bags to be used at checkout counters throughout Westport when the lightweight plastic bags used in supermarkets and retail stores become illegal on March 19.

Old-fashioned paper bags are permitted under the new ordinance, but its sponsors made it clear that the law's intent is to promote reusable bags in stores. Actually, some experts argue that the manufacturing process for paper bags is just as harmful to the environment as that used for plastic bags.

State Rep. Kim Fawcett, whose district covers Fairfield and Westport, is taking a different approach with a proposed state law that would allow shoppers to use plastic or paper bags in stores around Connecticut, but impose a 5 cent per bag "fee" on their use, with the fee going to the state Department of Environmental Protection. Using the reusable cloth bags, of course, would be free. The bill is currently being written up in committee and may be ready for public hearings in several months, Fawcett said this week.

Fawcett's proposal carries no fines for stores, but would put the onus on shoppers - they can continue to use plastic or paper bags if they choose, but would pay the fee for doing so. And Fawcett thinks that this monetary incentive, small though it may be, would encourage residents to start thinking "green."

Of course, Fawcett may have an easier time convincing suburban Fairfield County residents of the merits of her proposal than she will in the rest of the state.

Especially in these economic times, there are probably a lot of residents who won't take kindly to any new "fee" imposed by the state (there's another three-letter word for "fee." It's spelled "t-a-x").

It's uncertain how Fawcett's proposal for a statewide bag "fee" would jibe with Westport's ordinance, which, in our view, is more punitive toward local stores, both in the fines it imposes and because it may encourage some residents, who might prefer plastic bags, just to drive the short distance to Norwalk or Fairfield to do their shopping.

It seems clear, though, that the day has come in these parts for reusable bags for shopping. It does seem like the "green" thing to do.

WESTPORT NEWS, FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2009

# Creativity with a conscience



Finalists of the Reusable Bag Design Contest proudly hold their designs for the Town of Westport's official reusable bag.

# In the bag: Westport reusable bag design contest winners announced

By Anthony Karge  
akarge@bcnnew.com

The Town of Westport will now have its very own reusable bags to go along with its very own plastic bag ban, which is believed to be the first ordinance of its kind east of the Mississippi, according to members of the RTM's Fourth District who proposed the ordinance.

The winners of the Reusable Bag Design Contest were announced by First Selectman Gordon F. Joseloff on Jan. 16 in a packed meeting room in Westport Town Hall with the finalists, their families and curious onlookers in attendance.

Ross Gendels, a senior at Staples High School, won in the high school category. Sandy Schulze won the adult category. Anna Daytz, a fifth grader at King's Highway Elementary School, won in the youth category and her design will be used for a reusable lunch bag instead of a shopping bag like the others.

The contest for the reusable bag design was the idea of the RTM's Fourth District, who got the ball rolling on the town-wide plastic bag ban that takes effect on March 19. Their ultimate goal is to have shoppers forgo paper bags and use environmentally friendly reusable bags.

Daytz' design features the slogan "BYO Bag" colored to look like the earth. The words reduce, reuse and recycle are in a circular pattern in the middle. She credits some of the design to her "really good friend" Brynly Marsh, who came up with the idea for the "earth letters."

They were sitting at the same table in art class when her buddy gave her the creative insight. "I said if I won, I'd give her credit and that's what I'm doing," Daytz said.

She said she usually brings her lunch to school and is environmentally conscious. She is thinking about starting a petition with some other classmates to eliminate styrofoam from the cafeteria, all for the sake of the environment.

Daytz drew her painting the old-fashioned way — by hand — while Gendels and Schulze used a computer and Adobe Illustrator.

Gendels' chose to put a forest in his design because it "looked like Westport." Joseloff asked which part in particular but Gendels left it up to the viewer's interpretation. It took him about two days to finish the design. He plans on studying graphic design once he graduates.

It took Schulze less time to complete her design, which features a tree with leaves. She said it took her half-an-hour to do the design.

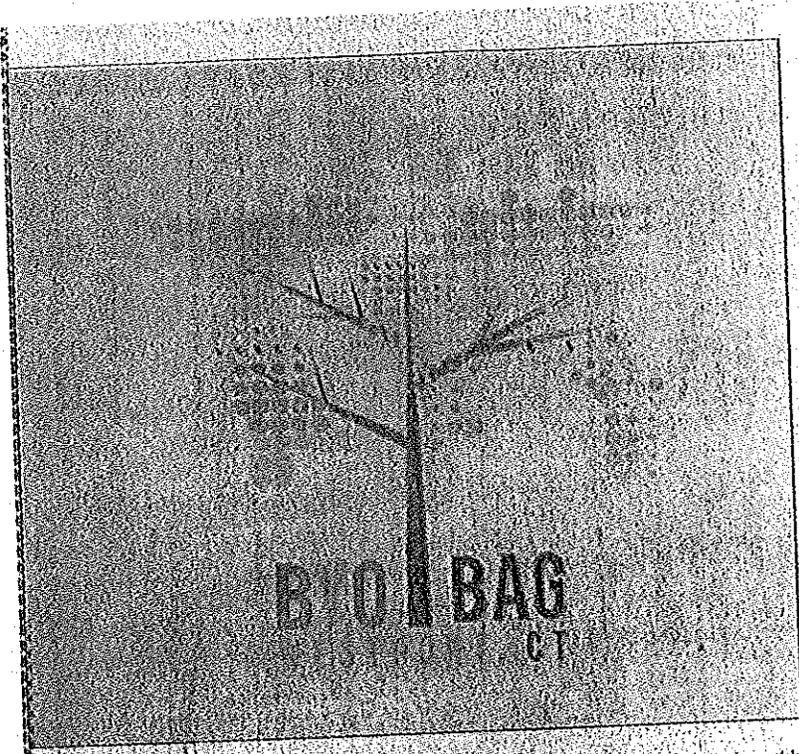
"Basically, I figured let's save some trees by not using paper . . . and as you can see here, that's the world map," she explained. "I know it's not very clear what it is, but that's a world map because we're saving the world one by one by one."

The panel to select the winners, chaired by Liz Rueven, former co-chairman of the Westport Arts Center Visual Arts Committee, featured seven other people that included a student, a photographer and an art teacher, among other diverse occupations.

"We met on Dec. 20 and spent three hours pulling our hair out trying to decide on the finalists and the winners," said Gene Seidman, who represented the RTM District Four on the jury. "It was a very difficult decision. In a certain way, every one of these [finalists] and all of the 141 [entrants] are winners because they did something quite historic."

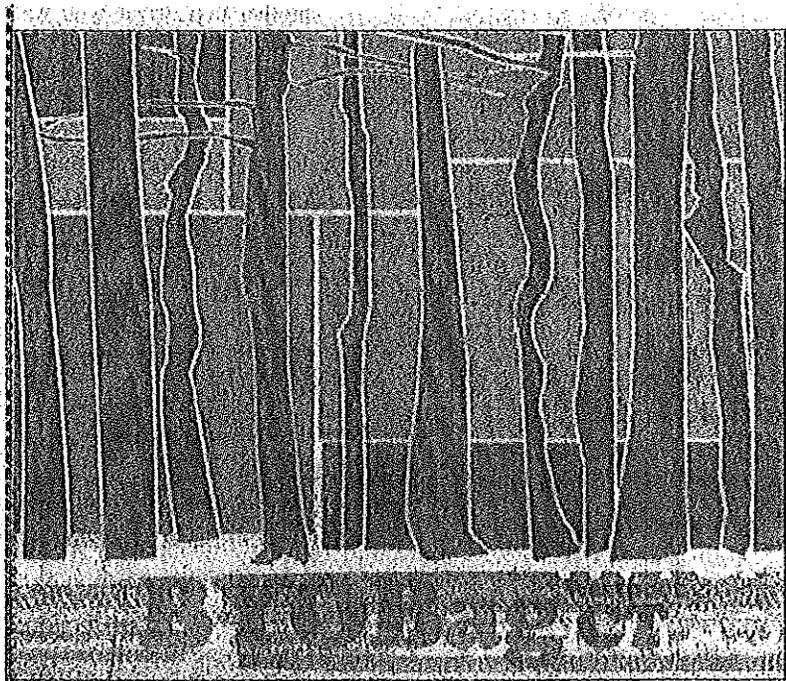
Westport's reusable bags are sponsored by the Westport/Weston Chamber of Commerce, Town Fair Tire and the Westport Downtown Merchants Association. If more sponsors are found, all of the finalists' designs may be available for purchase. Interested businesses can contact Liz Milwe of the RTM Fourth District at 227-6662.

The first printing of the winning bags will be available for purchase in March at an exhibit of all the entries at the Westport Public Library. On March 19, the ordinance goes into effect and the plan is to make the bags available at as many retail locations as possible. Those interested in seeing the finalists' designs can stop by Max's Art Supplies in February to see them on display.



**Sandy Schulzo was the winner in the adult category.**

Contributed graphic



**Ross Gendels was the winner in the high school category.**

Contributed graphic



Anna Daytz was the winner in the youth category.

Contributed graphic



WESTPORT NEWS photo / Anthony Kargo  
Winners of the Reusable Bag Design Contest show off their designs after First Selectman Gordon F. Joseloff announced the winners. From left are Anna Dayiz, Ross Gendels, Joseloff and Sandy Schulzo.

## RETAIL CHECKOUT BAGS ORDINANCE

Mr. Moderator, members of the Westport RTM, Westport town officials and representatives, and members of the public ... the four RTM members of District 4 and five co-sponsors thank you for this opportunity to present a proposed ordinance for the Town of Westport that takes a bold leadership step to prevent a further deterioration of our environment.

### SLIDE - INTRODUCTION

In the 1967 movie *The Graduate*, Benjamin was pondering what to do with his future. Mr. McGuire, a family friend, tells him, "just one word, plastics. There's a great future in plastics." How true this turned out to be. Plastics have invaded our world with a vengeance. However, as with many things, the pendulum has swung too far and now the challenge is how to remove plastics from our environment.

A major theme of the Westport 2007 Plan of Conservation & Development is "To Preserve Critical Environmental Areas." By now, everyone should be aware that plastic bags last forever once they get into the environment and then contaminate our land and water. Despite some efforts to recycle plastic bags, it is estimated that only 1-5% of the amount produced are recovered. Neither voluntary nor mandatory recycling of plastic bags seems to have made any significant impact. There now is widespread support to restrict the use of plastic bags both worldwide and on a local level. Most importantly, banning plastic bags leads to the ultimate goal of changing consumer behavior to bring reusable bags to stores when shopping.

### SLIDE - PLASTIC BAG USAGE

There is extensive information available to the public on the widespread use of plastic bags, just a portion of which is summarized here tonight.

At least 1 TRILLION plastic bags now are used annually world-wide. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, 100 billion are used in the U.S. each year, equivalent to over 450 bags for each person age 20 and over. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports that the amount of plastic in Municipal Solid Waste grew from under 1% in 1960 to 12% in 2006. In the Northern Pacific Ocean, there is a great vortex of ocean currents that has captured a swirling mass of plastic trash that is greater than the size of Texas.

## **SLIDE - PLASTICS GENERATION & RECOVERY**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency published this chart in 2006 showing the history of plastic production and recycling in the U.S. The chart shows almost no recycling for 20 years from 1960 to 1980. Although it shows that plastic recovery has increased in recent years, the total amount of plastic NOT recovered continues to grow at an alarming rate. The amount of unrecovered plastic as shown in red grew from 3 million tons in 1970 to 27 million tons in 2005. By comparison, the amount shown in green as recovered is less than 2 million tons.

## **SLIDE - RENEWABLE & NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES**

Plastic bags are made mostly from natural gas but also from petroleum, both of which are non-renewable resources.

Paper bags are manufactured from a renewable resource. The paper industry is committed to reforestation through its Sustainable Forest Initiative with over 200 program participants.

More importantly, reusable bags eliminate the need for either plastic or paper bags. Neither resource is consumed when shoppers bring their own bags to stores.

## **SLIDE - REUSABLE BAGS**

The purpose of the ordinance as described in its opening section is to encourage retail customers to rely upon reusable bags. At least 10 stores in Westport sell reusable bags, including all of the supermarkets, Patagonia, Westport Hardware, Gold's, Pier One and Barnes & Noble. Reusable bags come in many sizes and various materials. They are strong, usually washable, and some are made from non-porous materials that can be used for restaurant food takeout, including soup containers.

## **SLIDE - RECYCLABLE & NON-RECYCLABLE**

Paper bags can be recycled in Westport through home pickup. The American Forest & Paper Association claims that in 2007, 56% of the paper consumed in the U.S. was recovered through recycling.

However, plastic bags CANNOT be recycled through Westport's residential pickup program. They are made from either low density polyethylene (Resin Code 4) or high density polyethylene (Resin Code 2). While residents are allowed to recycle plastic Codes 1 and 2 from their homes, they are not allowed to include plastic bags of any type. Although plastic bags can be brought to supermarket bins for recycling, there is no incentive to do so and few people bother.

## **SLIDE - VOLUNTARY & MANDATORY RECYCLING**

Despite good intentions, experience has shown that recycling programs for plastic bags do not work very well. San Francisco tried to recycle plastic bags with poor results.

The American Chemical Council has said that there is no way to accurately measure recycling rates for plastic bags. However, according to data published by the American Chemical Council on its own website, only 2% of plastic bags and film produced in the U.S. is recovered.

Mandatory recycling is not the solution either. Mandatory recycling laws are only mandatory for stores and not for customers. The new mandatory recycling law in New York City has added a cost to retailers to buy collection bins, weigh the plastic bags they collect, ship the bags to a recycling center and prepare a report to send to the city. New York City has the added expense of managing and enforcing the program.

## **SLIDE - ENVIRONMENT**

Westport's environment is one of its most attractive features. The impact of plastic bags on our environment is cumulative since most do not go away. Plastic bags are aerodynamic and easily blow into our streams, the Saugatuck River, Cockenoe Island and Long Island Sound and stay there forever unless they are picked up one by one. Plastic bags create an environmental problem for generations to come.

## **SLIDE - WORLDWIDE SUPPORT FOR BANS**

The need for bans on plastic bags has been recognized worldwide through actions by governments in many countries. Bans on plastic bags have been enacted in San Francisco and Malibu, California, and last month in Maui in Hawaii. More than ten countries have passed bans on plastic bags and many others have imposed taxes or fees on plastic bags that have resulted in a drastic reduction in their use.

## **SLIDE - LOCAL SUPPORT & LEADERSHIP**

Westport's leadership on this issue enhances the Town's reputation as an attractive community in which to live. Leadership by a community not only benefits the community itself, but motivates others to benefit a larger population. Westport's First Selectman, its two State Assembly representatives and other community leaders support the proposed ordinance. The Westport ordinance is supported by both national and local retailers. A widely-publicized meeting for local merchants was held on July 22nd with no significant objections to the ordinance. The ordinance is supported by environmental groups.

## **SLIDE - ROLE OF GOVERNMENT**

Westport has dozens of separate ordinances that have been developed to meet the needs of the Town.

Some citizens object to any government telling them what they can or cannot do. However, certain regulations are needed to meet objectives that cannot be reached effectively any other way. Similar situations gave rise to seatbelt laws, other mandated auto safety features, bans on smoking, recycling and cell phone usage while driving. Laws such as these are needed because of the reluctance of individuals to change their attitudes and behavior on a voluntary basis.

## **SLIDE - ROLE OF WESTPORT CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT**

Although non-compliance is not expected, a simple enforcement procedure has been included in the ordinance if that occurs. The Westport Conservation Department is not required to check stores for compliance with this ordinance, but will respond to any complaints.

A Policy Statement on Retail Checkout Bags & Enforcement and a Notice of Violation have been drafted for the Department. The Policy Statement includes a provision for a review of the impact of the ordinance twelve months from its operative date.

## **SLIDE - BENEFITS**

Several Westport supermarkets already provide financial incentives to shoppers for bringing their own bags. Stores will have a strong marketing benefit from reusable bags with the store's name, which is why many are sold for as little as \$1. When plastic bags are banned, the supermarkets and other stores will have a reason to strongly promote reusable bags since they will save money by not having to provide any bags. This is a win-win-win solution for the environment, stores and residents.

## **SLIDE - OUTREACH AND EDUCATION CAMPAIGN**

A six-month outreach and education program is planned to promote reusable bags prior to the ordinance becoming operative. The RTM members of District 4 will organize and lead the program at no cost to the town, including publicity, working with merchants, environmental groups and students.

## **SLIDE - TIMING**

The time to pass this ordinance is now. A delay only increases the cumulative damage to the environment. Westport citizens enjoy our parks and recreation facilities, our beach, the Saugatuck River and everything that is done in Westport to make it an attractive place to live. Passage of this ordinance will encourage other actions to improve Westport's environment.

## **SLIDE - THANK YOU**

Remember ... this issue is not plastic versus paper bags, but plastic versus reusable bags.

When we adopt this ordinance, plastic bags will disappear at first and paper bags will disappear later. This ordinance is an effective and reasonable way to reach our goal of a cleaner environment.

Thank you.

ARTICLE \_\_\_\_

RETAIL CHECKOUT BAGS

Division 1. In General

§ \_\_\_\_\_. Purpose

The intent of this ordinance is to improve the environment in Westport by encouraging the use of reusable checkout bags and banning the use of plastic bags for retail checkout of purchased goods. Retail establishments are encouraged to make reusable bags available for sale.

§ \_\_\_\_\_. Justification

Non-biodegradable plastic bags often are discarded into the environment and end up polluting our waterways, clogging sewers, endangering marine life and causing unsightly litter. These bags last hundreds of years in landfills and are a potential source of harmful chemicals when they do break down.

Division 2. Checkout Bags

§ \_\_\_\_\_. Definitions

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this Division, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section:

- a) *Checkout bag* means a carryout bag that is provided to a customer at the point of sale. The term "checkout bag" does not include plastic produce bags or plastic bags measuring 28" by 36" or larger in size.
- b) *Plastic produce bag* means a flexible container made of very thin plastic material with a single opening that is used to transport produce, meats or other items selected by customers to the point of sale.
- c) *Retail sales* means the transfer to a customer of goods in exchange for payment occurring in retail stores, sidewalk sales, farmers' markets, flea markets and restaurants. The term "retail sales" does not include sales of goods at yard sales, tag sales, other sales by residents at their home, and sales by non-profit organizations.
- d) *Recyclable paper bag* means a paper bag that should have the following characteristics: (1) contains no old growth fiber, (2) is 100% recyclable overall and contains a minimum of 40% post-consumer recycled content, and (3) displays the words "Reusable" and "Recyclable" on the outside of the bag.
- e) *Reusable bag* means a bag with handles that is specifically designed and manufactured for multiple reuse and is (1) made of cloth or other fabric, and/or (2) made of durable plastic that is at least 2.25 mils thick.

§ \_\_\_\_\_. **Restriction on Checkout Bags**

- A. Any person engaged in retail sales shall provide only reusable bags and/or recyclable paper bags as checkout bags to customers.
- B. Nothing in this section shall preclude persons engaged in retail sales from making reusable bags available for sale to customers.

§ \_\_\_\_\_. **Operative Date**

This ordinance shall become operative six months following its effective date to allow retail establishments to dispose of their existing inventory of plastic checkout bags and convert to alternative packaging materials.

§ \_\_\_\_\_. **Notification; Issuance of Citations.**

Upon notification that a violation exists, the Conservation Department will investigate and verify the non-compliance. The Conservation Department is authorized to enforce the ordinance as follows:

**A. Notification of Violation.**

The Conservation Department shall provide written notice to any person who violates this ordinance. The notice of violation shall state the violation and the date by which said violation shall be remedied. Upon the failure to remedy the violation or commence corrective action to the satisfaction of the Conservation Department within the time specified in the notice, the Conservation Department shall issue a citation as provided for in Subsection B hereof.

Repeat offenders shall be issued additional citations without first receiving a notice of violation. Additional citations shall be issued no more frequently than ninety (90) days following a prior citation.

**B. Citation Issuance.**

The Conservation Department shall issue a citation when a violation persists beyond the date by which the Conservation Department required that the violation be remedied or beyond the date that corrective action be commenced.

The citation shall state:

- (i) A description of the violation.
- (ii) The initial fine of \$150.00 plus such other penalties, costs and/or fees due for each violation.
- (iii) That after four (4) days from the date of the citation, each day thereafter that the violator has not sent notification of compliance to the Conservation Department shall constitute a separate violation and shall be subject to an additional \$150.00 fine.

- (iv) That the uncontested payment of such fine(s), penalties, costs and/or fees shall be made within (10) days of the date of the citation.
- (v) That such person may contest the liability before a citation hearing officer by delivering in person or by mail within ten (10) days of the date of the citation a written demand for a hearing.
- (vi) That if such a hearing is not demanded, it shall be deemed an admission of liability and an assessment and judgment shall be entered against the person, and that such judgment may issue without further notice.

Any notice of violation or citation issued hereunder shall be sent to the person named in the citation by certified mail, return receipt requested and simultaneously by regular United States Postal Service mail.

Once a written demand for a hearing has been received by the Conservation Department, no additional citations shall be issued for the violation, nor shall daily fines be imposed until after the conclusion of the hearing procedure as set forth in Section \_\_\_\_\_ hereof.

§ \_\_\_\_\_. **Amount of Fine; Continuing Violations.**

- A. The fine for each violation shall be \$150.00, and shall be payable to the Town.
- B. Each occurrence of a violation, and each day that such violation continues, shall constitute a separate violation and shall be subject to a separate fine and may be cited as such.
- C. The person to whom a citation has been issued shall be responsible for reporting, in writing, subsequent compliance to the Conservation Department. Until such time, the fine(s) shall continue to be imposed on a daily basis.

§ \_\_\_\_\_. **Hearing Procedure for Citations.**

- A. The First Selectman shall appoint one or more hearing officers, other than any employee of the Town, to conduct the hearings resulting from violations of this ordinance. Any assessment by a hearing officer shall be entered as a judgment against the violator.
- B. A person who chooses to appeal a citation and requests a hearing to this effect shall be given written notice of the date, time and place for the hearing. Such hearing shall be held not less than fifteen (15) days nor more than thirty (30) days from the date of the hearing notice, provided the hearing officer shall grant upon good cause shown any reasonable request by an interested party for postponement or continuance. An original or certified copy of the citation issued by the Conservation Department shall be filed and retained by the Town and shall be deemed to be a business record and evidence of the facts contained therein. Upon request of the person appealing the citation, the presence of the Conservation Department employee who issued the citation shall be required at the hearing. A designated Town employee other than the hearing officer may present evidence on behalf of the Town. A person wishing to contest liability shall appear at the hearing

and may present evidence. If the person who received the citation fails to appear, the hearing officer may enter an assessment by default upon a finding of proper notice and liability under the ordinance.

- C. The hearing officer shall conduct the hearing in the order and form and with such methods of proof as he/she deems fair and appropriate. The rules regarding the admissibility of evidence shall not be strictly applied, but all testimony shall be given under oath or affirmation. The hearing officer shall announce his/her decision at the end of the hearing. If the hearing officer determines that the person is not liable, he/she shall dismiss the matter and enter his/her determination, in writing, accordingly. If the hearing officer determines that the person who received the citation is liable for the violation, the hearing officer shall then enter and assess the fines, penalties, costs or fees against the person as provided by this Article.
- D. If such assessment is not paid on the date of its entry, the hearing officer shall send by first class mail a notice of the assessment to the person found liable and shall file, not less than thirty (30) days nor more than twelve (12) months after such mailing, a certified copy of the notice of assessment with the Clerk of the Superior Court for the geographical area in which the Town is located, together with the applicable entry or filing fee. The certified copy of the notice of assessment shall constitute a record of assessment. Within such twelve-month period, all assessments against the same person may be accrued and filed as one record of assessment. The Clerk shall enter judgment, in the amount of the hearing officer's record of assessment, as well as court costs, against such person in favor of the Town. The hearing officer's assessment, when so entered as a judgment, shall have the effect of a civil money judgment and a levy of execution on such judgment may be issued without further notice to such person.
- E. A person against whom an assessment has been entered pursuant to this Article is entitled to judicial review by way of appeal in accordance with C.G.S. Section 7-152c(g).

**TOWN OF WESTPORT  
RETAIL CHECKOUT BAGS ORDINANCE - SUMMARY**

**Purpose** - The purpose of the ordinance is to encourage the use of reusable checkout bags and to ban the use of plastic bags for retail checkout of purchased goods.

**Ordinance** - Only reusable bags and/or recyclable paper bags are to be provided as checkout bags to retail customers.

**Date Enacted** - The ordinance was approved at the Town of Westport Representative Town Meeting on September 2, 2008.

**Operative Date** - The ordinance becomes operative on March 19, 2009, allowing time for retail establishments to dispose of their existing inventory of plastic checkout bags and to convert to alternative packaging materials.

**Coverage** - The ordinance applies to all retail stores, sidewalk sales, farmers' markets, flea markets and restaurants. It excludes sales of goods at yard sales, tag sales, other sales by residents at their home, and sales by non-profit organizations.

**Bag Exclusions** - Excluded from the ordinance are:

1. Plastic produce bags made of very thin plastic material used to transport produce, meats or other items selected by customers to the point of sale.
2. Plastic bags that have more than one opening, such as cleaners bags.
3. Plastic bags measuring 28" by 36" or larger.

**Reusable Bag** - A reusable bag is a bag with handles that is designed and manufactured for multiple reuse and is made of cloth, other fabric or durable plastic that is at least 2.25 mils thick.

**Recyclable Paper Bag** - A recyclable paper bag should:

1. Not contain any old growth fiber.
2. Be 100% recyclable overall.
3. Contain a minimum of 40% post-consumer recycled content.
4. Display the words "reusable" and "recyclable" on the outside of the bag.

**Enforcement** - Compliance with the ordinance will be enforced by the Town of Westport Conservation Department through notices of violations, citations and fines.