

I am sorry I cannot be at the hearing on plastic bags tomorrow, as the recent weather has caused so many work engagements to be postponed and rescheduled to include tomorrow.

But I support a bill to ban plastic bags.

I was one of four members of the Westport RTM to bring the ordinance to our town seven years ago. The RTM passed the bill in Sept., 2008 and it became effective in March 2009, nearly six years ago. The hands on experience in Westport for that long period has been that

- 1) The ban works. It alters behavior and does encourage shoppers to use reusable bags
- 2) Retail activity is not diminished. E.g., The Westport Stop & Shop is among the highest grossing stores in the Chain
- 3) There is very little concern about the ban. As a legislator who is closely tied to the ban, I have received virtually no complaints, and I have been reelected three times!
- 4) The world has not ended in Westport. We have a vibrant Town and economy. The Town is proud to lead in this effort.

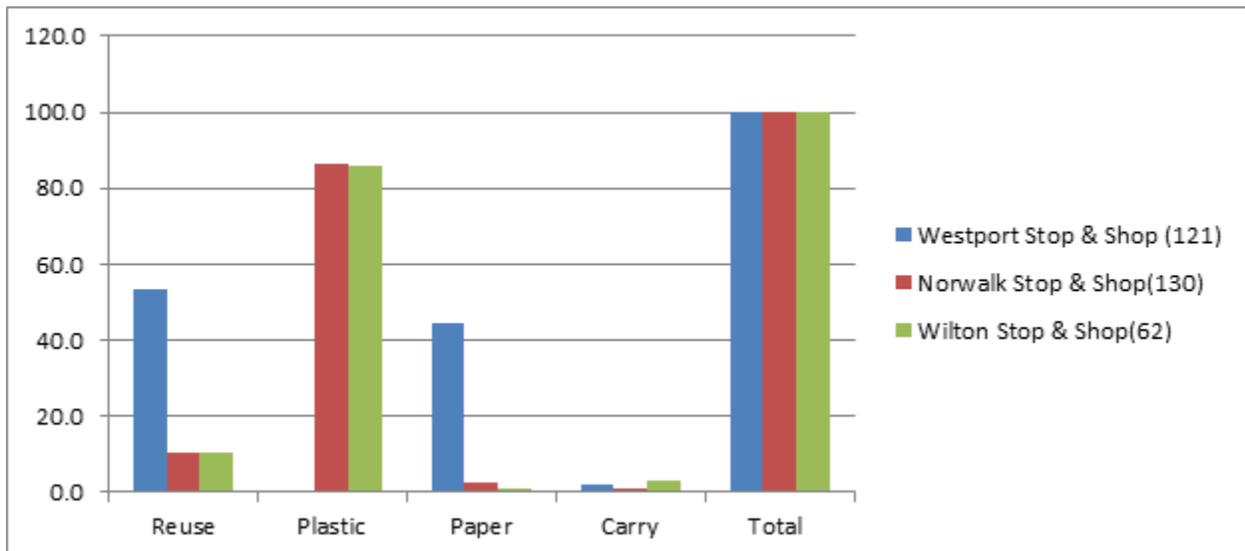
That is my main message. Here are a few facts to reinforce the thoughts above:

First, I confirm that I believe it is very conservative to say that since the bag ban, the average household in Westport (combining single individuals and families with many children) uses at least four fewer plastic bags per week. It would be hard for anyone to challenge that small assertion, which is why I use it. With 10,000 households in Westport, that is an average 40,000 fewer bags used per week in our small town, or 2,080,000 per year. It would be lovely to think that 99% of our population treats their domestic waste responsibly, but even if that admirable number were achieved that would leave 20,800 plastic bags per year blowing into our trees, and Long Island Sound.

There are nearly 1,500,000 households in CT. Using the same methodology, your bill could provide the impetus for the use of 6,000,000 fewer bags in the waste stream per week throughout the state or 312,000,000 per year. Pretty amazing. If one percent of our state's population let a bag slip out of the established waste stream that would leave 3,120,000 bags per year in the beautiful scenery of "Revolutionary" CT. I suspect that shocking number is, in actuality, higher!

	Westport	CT
Households	~ 10,000	~ 1,500,000
Avg Bags / Week*	4	4
Avg bags / Year	2,080,000	312,000,000
6 Year life of Westport's ban	12,480,000	1,872,000,000 **
Waste bags in the environment each year with		
99% responsible usage	20,800	3,120,000
* Assumed conservative average usage per household of all sizes		
** If CT had enacted a ban on March 19, 2009		

Regarding the economics of bags, I refer to a truly objective survey that a professor from Fairfield University did at three area Stop & Shops in May – June, 2010, about 15 months after our ban went into effect in March, 2009. I attach a word doc summary of the study, but the main outcome is reflected in the following graph which shows the use of Paper, plastic, reusable, and carried groceries out of the Stop & Shops in Westport (subject to the ban so zero plastic); Norwalk; and Wilton. The percentage of users of each type of bag is shown below:



By using the percentages of bags used and the costs of the different forms of bags, it is easy to show that if 55% of shoppers use reusable bags as this survey demonstrates, there is little loss to the merchant.

Assuming a cost of 8 cents per paper bag and 2 cents per plastic bag, (these are my guesses from internet searches; I suspect large grocery costs are much less, and this would be an interesting question for them) and using the mix of bags indicated in the chart, Westport's merchant's costs about 1.5 cents per bag higher than Norwalk's and 1.75 cents per bag higher than Wilton's. This is indeed a cost to be concerned with, but any sort of bag charge would easily defray this cost, and 10 cents would certainly provide a profit to any store. I think this analysis, refined to include a merchant's stated cost, would indicate that the 10 cent charge might be reduced to a much more acceptable level.

Stop & Shop	% of Total Bags used								TOTAL COST
	Paper		Plastic		Reusable		None		
	%	Cost / Bag	%	Cost / Bag	%	Cost / Bag	%	Cost / Bag	
Westport	0.44	\$0.08	0	\$0.02	0.55	0	0.01	0	
		\$0.04		\$0.00		0		0	\$0.0352
Norwalk	0.03	\$0.08	0.86	\$0.02	0.1	0	0.01	0	
		\$0.00		\$0.02		0		0	\$0.0196
Wilton	0.01	\$0.08	0.85	\$0.02	0.1	0	0.03	0	
		\$0.00		\$0.02		0		0	\$0.0178

I hope these few thoughts are useful, and I look forward to watching as you continue to pursue this important topic.

Thanks and all the best,

Jeff Wieser
 Representative Town Meeting
 District 4 Representative