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 CLERK TO COUNCIL

AGENDA  
 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
 WORK SESSION  
 Monday, September 25, 2017  
 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
 (or immediately following Council meeting)  
 Large Meeting Room, Bluffton Branch Library  
 120 Palmetto Way, Bluffton

Committee Members:  
 Brian Flewelling, Chairman  
 Roberts "Tabor" Vaux, Vice Chairman  
 Rick Caporale  
 Gerald Dawson  
 Steve Fobes  
 York Glover  
 Alice Howard

Staff Support:  
 Anthony Criscitiello, Planning Director  
 Gary James, Assessor  
 Eric Larson, Division Director  
 Environmental Engineering  
 Dan Morgan, Division Director  
 Mapping & Applications

1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 P.M.
2. RECEIPT OF PUBLIC COMMENT AND INPUT INTO POLICIES FOR AN ORDINANCE TO DEAL WITH PLASTIC BAGS AND SUBSTITUTE FOR REUSABLE RETAIL CARRYOUT BAGS IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF BEAUFORT COUNTY
3. ADJOURNMENT

2017 Strategic Plan Committee Assignments  
 Hilton Head National Rezoning/Development Agreement  
 Priority Investment – Capital Projects Long-Term Prioritized Requirements  
 Passive County Parks: Plan, Funding  
 Comprehensive Countywide System/Stormwater Utility (Agreements with Municipalities)  
 2018 Priority Projects: Immediate Opportunities  
 Stormwater Management Program/Policy: Implementation  
 Okatie River Restoration: Funding  
 May River Action Plan  
 Rivers and Creeks Water Quality: Evaluation  
 Transfer of Development Rights  
 Buckingham Plantation Community Development Plan: Amendment



# ADD-ONS

The document(s) herein were provided to Council for information and/or discussion after release of the official agenda and backup items.

Topic: Emails / Letters / Documents Relative to Plastic Bag Ban  
Date Submitted: September 25, 2017  
Submitted By: Public Speakers  
Venue: Natural Resources Committee Work Session

## Bennett, Ashley

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**From:** Flewelling, Brian  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 28, 2017 9:11 AM  
**To:** Amy Lavine  
**Cc:** Bennett, Ashley  
**Subject:** RE: Plastic Bag Ban Statistic Sources

Thanks, Ms. Lavine. We appreciate your help in coming to grips with what we all agree is a serious problem.

I've copied our Clerk to Council on this reply. Ashley, please forward to Council and Management.

Thanks,

Brian Flewelling

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**From:** Amy Lavine [amy.ellen.lavine@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 26, 2017 9:48 PM  
**To:** Flewelling, Brian  
**Subject:** Plastic Bag Ban Statistic Sources

Dear Councilman Flewelling,

My name is Amy Lavine and I spoke to the Natural Resources Committee on Monday evening in favor of the ban on plastic bags. In my remarks, I stated that 95% of plastic bags are not properly recycled, and Councilman Vaux requested a citation for this information. This 95% statistic comes from the EPA's 2006 report that only 5% of plastic bags are properly recycled, as cited in the Equinox Center's 2013 report. To provide some background, The Equinox Center, now known as the Equinox Project, is a nonpartisan initiative dedicated to providing research to inform action on economic and environmental issues that affect quality of life. I am attaching the relevant pages of this report to this email, with the statistical information highlighted. The full text of the report can be found at

<https://energycenter.org/sites/default/files/Plastic-Bag-Ban-Web-Version-10-22-13-CK.pdf><<https://energycenter.org/sites/default/files/Plastic-Bag-Ban-Web-Version-10-22-13-CK.pdf>>

A more recent EPA report, from 2014, states that only 6.6% of HDPE (high-density polyethylene), the material single use plastic bags are made from, is properly recycled. While 6.6% is greater than 5%, it is important to note that the EPA also includes products like shrink wrap and other types of packaging in the HDPE statistical group, potentially accounting for the increased percentage. Again, I have attached the pertinent pages of the report to this email, with the relevant statistics highlighted. The full report can be found at [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-11/documents/2014\\_smm\\_tablesfigures\\_508.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-11/documents/2014_smm_tablesfigures_508.pdf)<[https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-11/documents/2014\\_smm\\_tablesfigures\\_508.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-11/documents/2014_smm_tablesfigures_508.pdf)>

I appreciate you and your fellow council members taking the time to thoroughly review the issue of plastic bags in Beaufort County and consider the bag ban. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to email me.

Best,

Amy Lavine



September 25, 2017

Chairman Brian Flewelling  
Natural Resources Committee  
Beaufort County Administration Building  
100 Ribaut Road  
Beaufort, SC 29902

**Re: Plastic retail bag ordinance discussion**

Chairman Flewelling, Vice Chairman Vaux and members of the Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of the American Progressive Bag Alliance (APBA), an organization that represents our country's plastic retail bag manufacturers and recyclers – and the thousands of men and women employed by this industry, I thank you for the opportunity to share our collective concerns with the plastic bag ordinance being considered in Beaufort County.

We recognize that the members of this committee, and South Carolina's coastal residents more broadly, take seriously the goals of waste and litter reduction. Like each of you, APBA members care deeply about environmental stewardship and sustainability, which is a primary reason why we are pioneers in the field of plastic film recycling. Our industry manufactures plastic and paper bags and promotes the responsible use, re-use, recycling and disposal of these American-made products. Across the country, there are thousands of convenient in-store plastic bag recycling drop-off points because APBA members chose to invest in building retail partnerships to expand recycling infrastructure for consumers.

There are many people who believe that banning the standard plastic grocery bag will help the environment. But as time and experience have shown, that just isn't true. Bag bans may lead to fewer plastic retail bags in the waste and litter streams, but these policies have never delivered meaningful reductions in overall waste or litter wherever they've been tried. In fact, there's a record of bag bans encouraging the use of replacement products that are actually tougher on the environment.

In Austin, Texas, the volume of landfilled plastic bag waste increased in the wake of a bag ban because thicker retail bags were mandated in the place of typical bags and simply assumed their place in the waste stream.<sup>i</sup> In California, a statewide bag ban and paper bag tax also mandated a roughly five-times-thicker reusable plastic bag. Because of increased bag thickness, plastic bag consumption in California – by volume – is on track to grow by as much as 25 percent.<sup>ii</sup>

Of all ordinances we've seen, the one proposed in Beaufort County is most similar to Chicago's initial bag ban ordinance, which was passed with a provision mandating a minimum thickness for reusable bags and no correlating reusable bag tax. Chicago abandoned its bag ban earlier this year – in favor of an equally unproven bag tax – with Mayor Emanuel remarking, "I adopted a policy on plastic bags with the City Council. It hasn't worked."<sup>iii</sup>

When St. Louis Park, MN explored a bag ban ordinance of their own, the leader of the Environment and Sustainability Commission's Zero Waste Working Group advised against the policy, warning it would be "counterproductive." A product-specific ordinance, in her estimation, could distract from tackling more serious issues in the waste stream. She concluded her position paper with the note, "Let's not fall into the trap of competing with our surrounding cities by racing to [regulate] retail plastic bags... It is less important that we appear green, let's be green."<sup>iv</sup>

Where plastic retail bags are concerned, EPA data shows they comprise just one half of one percent of the nation’s municipal solid waste.<sup>v</sup> Of the retail bags that end up in the waste stream, surveys suggest most get there because they’re re-used as trashcan liners or to dispose of other products.<sup>vi</sup> Nationally, scientific litter surveys show plastic retail bags account for less than one to two percent of overall litter.<sup>vii</sup> With such a small share of litter and waste derived from bags, a bag ban in Beaufort County simply isn’t going to drive meaningful improvement in either category — even if bags disappeared entirely.

The same is true of marine litter. 2016 Ocean Conservancy data shows plastic grocery bags account for only a fraction of the items collected from South Carolina’s shores and waterways.<sup>viii</sup> Cigarettes, food wrappers, bottle caps and bottles represent greater marine litter challenges.<sup>ix</sup>

In our experience monitoring similar ordinances around the country, we have seen that if the goal of the ordinance is truly to reduce waste and litter, bag bans aren’t smart policy and won’t achieve Beaufort County’s desired results, plain and simple.

We appreciate the efforts you’ve made to ensure a careful dialog takes place surrounding this proposal. We are also committed to the success of recycling programs that are overseen by our industry and members—programs designed to protect the value of post-consumer plastic resins for recycling purposes. It is a point of pride for each of us that even with plastic bag re-use rates of up to 90 percent reducing the recycling pool, more than 1.17 billion pounds of bags, film and wrap were recycled through retail take-back programs in 2014 alone, representing a roughly 74 percent increase in the rate of this recycling since 2005.<sup>x</sup>

The APBA would like to urge committee members to think outside the typical ban-or-tax box toward better tested solutions that are more equipped to advance the county’s sustainability goals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Matthew Seaholm  
Executive Director, American Progressive Bag Alliance

cc: Vice Chairman Tabor Vaux  
Council Member Rick Caporale  
Council Member Gerald Dawson  
Council Member Steve Fobes  
Council Member York Glover  
Council Member Alice Howard

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<sup>i</sup> Minter, Adam, [How a Ban on Plastic Bags Can Go Wrong](#), Bloomberg View, August 18, 2015.

<sup>ii</sup> The Environmental Promises and Costs of Product Bans; and Gayle Putrich, [Analysis: Bag ban could up plastic use](#), Plastics News, 19 September 2016.

<sup>iii</sup> Spielman, Fran, [Some aldermen slam Emanuel’s 7 cent tax on disposable bags](#), *Chicago Sun Times*, October 18, 2016

<sup>iv</sup> Voigt, Judy, Environment and Sustainability Commission Zero Waste Work Group Plastic Bag Position Statement, September 2015, presented at the St. Louis Park Plastic Bag Listening Session convened on October 5, 2015.

<sup>v</sup> [Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: 2014 Tables and Figures](#), Environmental Protection Agency, December 2016.

<sup>vi</sup> National Plastic Shopping Bag Recycling and Signage Testing: A Survey of the General Population, APCO Insights, March 2007.

<sup>vii</sup> [ER Planning PR Bags Report Brief – 2015 Litter Survey Rankings](#), Environmental Resources Planning, LLC, 2015.

<sup>viii</sup> [Ocean Conservancy ICC Data – Plastic Grocery Bags in Beach Litter](#), Environmental Resources Planning, LLC, September 2017.

<sup>ix</sup> Together for Our Ocean, International Coastal Cleanup 2017 Report, International Coastal Cleanup and the Ocean Conservancy, 2017.

<sup>x</sup> National Plastic Shopping Bag Recycling and Signage Testing: A Survey of the General Population, APCO Insights, March 2007; Moore Recycling Associates Inc. [2013 National Postconsumer Plastic Bag & Film Recycling Report](#), February 2015; [2014 National Postconsumer Plastic Bag & Film Recycling Report](#), American Chemistry Council, January 2016; and Alexander, Steve, Steve Russell, and Steve Sikra, [Plastic Recycling is Working: Here’s Why](#), Live Science, November 25, 2015.

## Bennett, Ashley

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**From:** Flewelling, Brian  
**Sent:** Friday, September 29, 2017 8:45 AM  
**To:** Rikki Parker; #COUNCIL  
**Subject:** RE: Plastic bag ban public input meeting - follow up

Rikki,

Thanks for the info. I hope you don't mind that I've shared it, so that all of Council is as informed as you've ensured that I am.

Brian

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From: Rikki Parker [rikkip@scccl.org]  
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 4:46 PM  
To: Flewelling, Brian  
Subject: Plastic bag ban public input meeting - follow up

Councilman Flewelling:

Thank you for attending the Natural Resources public input session Monday night. I always appreciate your pointed and insightful questions. At the meeting, I am sure you noted a couple of suspicious facts/claims. I hope the information below clears up some inconsistencies. I have included links to sources where appropriate:

- Bag thickness/why are thicker plastic bags allowed?: As written, the ordinance allows recyclable bags thicker than 2.25 mm. Bags that fall into this category are similar to those you would receive at a department store when you purchase clothing. These bags are thicker, therefore slightly less problematic for recycling facilities, but they can still disrupt machinery. Right now, thicker plastic bags are less common than single use plastic bags. Of course, that could change if grocery stores decide to offer thicker bags in lieu of single use plastic bags. However, we have not seen that happen on Folly Beach or Isle of Palms. But, that does not mean it could not happen here (as it did in Chicago). Council could consider amending the ordinance to get rid of this potential loophole.

- Plastic in the ocean: Last night, someone claimed that plastic bags make up 90% of marine debris. That is not true. Plastics are, however, startlingly common in our oceans. Every year, 8 million metric tons of plastic are dumped into our oceans<<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/world-s-oceans-clogged-by-millions-of-tons-of-plastic-trash/>>. That number is so high that, according to the World Economic Forum, by 2050 there may be more plastic in our oceans than fish.<[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/01/20/by-2050-there-will-be-more-plastic-than-fish-in-the-worlds-oceans-study-says/?utm\\_term=.5b5f3f496adc](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/01/20/by-2050-there-will-be-more-plastic-than-fish-in-the-worlds-oceans-study-says/?utm_term=.5b5f3f496adc)> In addition, in 2016, plastic grocery bags were the fifth most common item found during an international coastal cleanup – more than 500,000 plastic bags were recovered.<[https://oceanconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/International-Coastal-Cleanup\\_2017-Report.pdf](https://oceanconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/International-Coastal-Cleanup_2017-Report.pdf)>

- Percentage of plastic bags recycled: there was a question at the meeting about the recycling rate for plastic bags. About 5% of plastic bags are recycled. That number comes from an Equinox Center report<<https://energycenter.org/sites/default/files/Plastic-Bag-Ban-Web-Version-10-22-13-CK.pdf>> and cites a 2006 EPA report. Since 2006 the EPA changed how it groups recycling materials and now lumps all HDPE “bags, sacks and wraps” together to include types of cling wrap and film. The recycling rate for those materials is 6.6%.<[https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-11/documents/2014\\_smm\\_tablesfigures\\_508.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-11/documents/2014_smm_tablesfigures_508.pdf)> (see chart on page 9 of the link). The 12% number often cited by the plastic industry is the total rate of plastic bag, sack and wrap recycling and includes non-HDPE bags that are not included in a ban on plastic bags. Single use plastic bags are typically

HDPE bags. Regardless of which number you use, the recycling rate for plastic bags pales in comparison to the paper recapture rate which is around 67%. Paper bags are also biodegradable and make great material for compost. In addition, they do not harm local wildlife.

- Tax: although it wasn't mentioned at the public input meeting, a local news report contained a quote about a 10 cent tax/fee. This is not being proposed. Folly Beach and Isle of Palms both have bag bans that are not accompanied by any taxes or fees.
- Cost to consumers: The Equinox Center report cited above estimates that a plastic bag ban would cost consumers around \$7.70 the first year it is implemented (attributable to purchasing reusable bags). That cost can be alleviated by local organizations and businesses donating plastic bags to give away for free. Fortunately, Beaufort and Lowcountry Indivisible are already giving out plastic bags at local Farmer's Markets. These efforts can be amplified in advance of any bag ban going into effect. Often times cities and towns organize bag giveaway days at local libraries, churches and other locations.
- In addition, as customers build up a supply of reusable bags (sometimes purchasing those bags from local grocery stores and retailers) retail establishments will have to purchase fewer and fewer paper bags – actually saving them money in the long run. Those cost savings can be passed along to consumers, decreasing grocery bills. Studies in San Francisco show an initial increase in cost to retailers due to new demand for paper bags (2-3 years), but, long term, retail profits actually increased slightly.
- Educational/voluntary efforts: although it was not mentioned at the meeting, educational efforts are often touted as a solution to plastic bag pollution. Unfortunately, these are not very effective. In 2009, Santa Clara, California undertook an educational campaign complete with radio and television ads, published pamphlets, etc. The city also distributed almost 20,000 free reusable bags. Unfortunately, the program resulted in only a 2% increase in reusable bag use. Surfrider Foundation compiled an excellent list of municipalities and counties that have tried voluntary reduction efforts<<http://www.surfrider.org/coastal-blog/entry/voluntary-plastic-bag-reductions-dont-work>> and the results of those efforts.

I hope I have not missed any topics or questions that came up during the meeting. Please let me know if there is additional information I can track down for you, particularly in advance of the Oct. 5 meeting. I will see you at tomorrow's NRPIC meeting!

Best,

Rikki Parker  
South Coast Office Project Manager  
Coastal Conservation League  
RikkiP@scccl.org  
(o) 843-522-1800  
(c) 217-273-8823





September 15, 2017

Chairman Flewelling and Members of the Natural Resources Committee  
100 Ribaut Road  
Beaufort, SC 29902

Dear Members of the Beaufort County Natural Resources Committee:

The South Carolina Retail Association represents a variety of chain and independent merchants in every county across the state. The Association's diverse membership includes apparel, automotive, chain restaurant, convenience, department, electronics, grocery, hardware, and pharmacy stores. We are proud to represent the industry that employs one in four workers in the state.

The purpose of the South Carolina Retail Association is to advocate for our members when a situation disallows them to do it themselves, and this is why we write to you today. Our member companies are concerned with Beaufort County's proposed ordinance that creates a ban on plastic bags but are hesitant to speak publicly on this issue for fear of public backlash. Many of our retailer members have been approached by the media wanting to know their stance on the proposed ban, putting them in a public relations situation they simply cannot win.

Therefore, the South Carolina Retail Association urges you to see that plastic bag bans are well-intentioned but misguided and represent ineffective public policy. Banning plastic bags: 1) creates other environmental problems, 2) does nothing to solve local litter problems, and 3) creates logistical problems for many different types of businesses who will ultimately pass increased costs on to consumers.

Research shows that banning plastic bags creates other unintended environmental consequences. A ban on plastic bags forces retailers to use paper bags or thicker plastic reusable bags, which are actually *less* environmentally friendly than plastic. The production of plastic bags consumes less than 4% of the water needed to make paper bags and requires 70% less energy to manufacture than paper bags. For every truck needed to deliver plastic bags, seven trucks are needed to haul the same number of paper bags. Plastic bags can be reused many times over before being recycled at almost any retail grocery, pharmacy, hardware, or big box store.

You may be aware that the Outer Banks of North Carolina adopted a plastic bag ban in 2009, but it has not been effective at eliminating plastic bag litter. Data from the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shows that between 2009 and 2011, plastic bag litter actually *increased*:

<b>Dare County</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Number of bags recovered	223	3	175	336
Number of volunteers	169	146	172	100
Miles cleaned	41	70	81	25

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Over the last eight years, impacted retailers on North Carolina's Outer Banks have been financially burdened to meet the requirements of the ban. Some retailers have seen significant operational cost increases upwards of \$50,000 annually at a single store location simply because of the paper bag cost over plastic. Paper bags cost retailers, on average, eight times more than plastic bags.

A plastic bag ban will also negatively impact businesses in the county and grocery/retail stores are not the only type of business impacted: dry cleaners, newspapers, hotels, day cares, hospitals, and take-out restaurants all use plastic bags every day and for good reason. Plastic alternatives are expensive and for businesses that operate across county lines, keeping up with a patchwork of local environmental laws becomes time- and resource-intensive and businesses are likely to pass those increased expenses along to the consumer.

Ultimately, recycling plastic bags is a shared responsibility among retailers and consumers. Retailers recognize they must take a leadership role in the recycling process, which is why most chain stores have a means for customers to return bags to the store to be responsibly recycled, when most curbside recycling programs do not allow for recycling of bags.

The problems associated with plastic bag litter is complex, therefore a simple ban on plastic bags will not adequately address the problem. The South Carolina Retail Association supports efforts to educate customers on the effects of plastic bag litter. The Association also supports using existing litter ordinances to curb all litter on beaches, rather than singling out plastic bags in the county.

We hope you'll see that a plastic bag ban represents ineffective public policy and is not the solution to the problem. The South Carolina Retail Association and its member companies support efforts to ensure that plastic bags are used and recycled properly, but have concerns that this proposed ordinance creates a costly system and doesn't address the problem adequately. We look forward to continuing discussions and hope we can serve as a helpful resource to you and Beaufort County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lindsey R. Kueffner".

Lindsey Kueffner  
Executive Director