

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2019
7:30 P.M. – GUILFORD TOWN HALL**

First Selectman Matthew Hoey called the public hearing to order at 7:30 p.m.

Present:	Board Members:	Matthew Hoey, Charles Havrda, Susan Renner and Louis Federici
	Town Officials:	Town Attorney Peter Barrett, Environmental Planner Kevin Magee, Sustainable Guilford Members Terri Cain, Mark Allegrini, Lily Mackey, Julie Paquette, John Muro and Howard Brown, Economic Development Coordinator Brian McGlone and Clerk Traci Brinkman
	Others:	About 120 in the audience
	Media:	Guilford Courier Reporter Zoe Roos

1. Public Hearing to obtain comment and consider enactment of “An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the Town of Guilford – Chapter 236, Solid Waste and Recycling,” to add Section 236-8, entitled: “Prohibition of Use by Business Establishment of Single-Use Plastic Bags.”

Terri Cain gave a brief presentation. She said the mission is to clean up and preserve our historic Town Guilford, which is situated on Long Island Sound and deserves respect and care. Ms. Cain said with this ordinance the Board of Selectmen has listened to residents’ concerns and it will be effective in reducing waste. She thanked the Sustainable Guilford Task Force, BYO Guilford and the GHS Environmental Club for all their work toward this goal.

Ms. Cain said since this idea was first brought forward there were eight towns in the state that had passed bans. Now 13 towns have ordinances and in addition there are 16-20 towns that are starting the process. Branford and Madison are also working on the same ban. She added that California, New York and Hawaii all have statewide bans.

Mr. Hoey opened the floor to questions from the public.

Public Questions

Rob Schaper of 132 Race Hill Road asked what would happen after the meeting tonight.

Mr. Hoey explained that the Board of Selectmen will make a decision on the ordinance. If approved, according to the language contained, it would not officially go into effect until January 1, 2020.

Dee Jacob of 33 Trolley Road asked what steps were taken to inform local businesses in town of this.

Mr. Hoey said this issue has been on the table for three months. Since then the Sustainable Guilford Task Force has been visiting businesses and informing the public about this. They also held an informational meeting.

Ms. Cain said they did speak to many merchants and stood at the Green with signs. They went to festivals and tried to reach as many people as they possibly could.

Hazel Carby of 27 South Fair Street questioned why this is just for single-use checkout bags and not plastic produce bags as well.

Mr. Hoey explained that this is a first step to start to make a difference and possibly they would get to that point in the future.

Ms. Cain said they are hoping this is a way to raise consciousness and maybe once this is done those other things such as the plastic produce bags will change as a result when people become more aware.

A resident asked about violations of the ordinance.

Attorney Barrett explained that this is part of a larger Chapter in the Town Code that addresses Solid Waste and Recycling, which includes enforcement and refers to the statute. Enforcement will be the same for recycling, bulky waste, etc. It is all the same process.

Bill Dwyer of 144 Donald Road asked if it was the intention at some point to also change the ordinance to ban paper bags as well.

Ms. Cain said the point of the ordinance is to reduce waste. The idea is to get rid of single-use plastic bags, but they can't have everyone switch to paper because that also has a carbon foot print. The whole point is to encourage people to reduce waste by bringing their own. Paper bags won't be banned, but there is a fee on paper to help replace the cost of the bag and that will go to merchants. Once you begin bringing your own it becomes a habit.

Mr. Hoey noted it is a behavioral modification that everyone needs to make.

Marsha Griffin of 638 West Lake Avenue noted a study she found in California after the ban. There was a drastic increase in the purchase of heavy duty plastic bags to replace the single-use plastic bags, which outweighs the benefits of the ban. She asked what if this happens in Guilford.

Ms. Cain said she read those reports, but people are not using those bags to carry groceries purchases so the question is what are they using them for. Plastic is a problem around the word and they can't solve it all at once, but they have to take steps in the right direction.

Julia Schroers of 401 Three Corners Road asked what the next steps are. She questioned if product bags would be targeted.

Ms. Cain said they are hoping people change their habits and would stop using those on their own. She added that they haven't talked about going further, but really hope that companies become responsible for the plastic that they package in.

Christian Pfeiffer of 51 Elizabeth Street asked if there is a date the board will vote on this.

Mr. Hoey said the board could have voted this evening, but he would like the whole board to have the opportunity to vote on this so it probably would be at a regular meeting next month.

A resident asked what is going on at the state level with regard to a ban.

Mr. Hoey explained that the state bill has morphed into a ban to a two-year phase out with a 10 cent charge on plastic and paper. He added that unlike most state statutes, municipalities will be allowed to enact measures that go further than the state legislation.

Valerie Brown of Cherry Street asked if this ban could go further and could there be communication with growers about product packaging.

Mr. Hoey said at this point they do not have plans to push this ban further. What often works best is consumer pressure for those changes. He thinks this will build a groundswell for other plastic related issues.

Carol Winslow of 20 Long Hill Farm asked if the board could do a straw poll of the people at the meeting.

Mr. Hoey said he would do so at the end of the evening after everyone has had a chance to speak.

Lily Mackey of 46 Harrison Road asked how people could get involved that are interested in this issue.

Mr. Hoey noted that Ms. Mackey is a high school junior and official member of the Sustainable Task Force. He added that best way for people to get involved is to talk to friends and relatives to pass on information and put pressure on their local legislators.

Sabine Harris of 607 Long Hill Road said in the ordinance there are paper bag fee exemptions. She asked how many people or what percent might be given those exemptions.

Mr. Hoey said those that participate in federally funded programs such as SNAP, which replaced the food stamps program, would be exempt. He added that he doesn't expect it to be a large piece, but that portion of the ordinance is in deference to those programs.

Samantha Bonz of 109 Dunk Rock Road asked how the bans have helped in other communities and how they think it will help Guilford.

Ms. Cain said the bans have been very effective in the immediate reduction of plastic bag litter. Greenwich passed their ban a year ago and has reported a significant reduction in waste and the amount of bags picked up at beach cleanups.

Wendy Mackey of 46 Harrison Road said she has not heard from one person against this. She asked if they thought of providing any incentives to businesses eliminating plastic bags prior to the January 1, 2020 date.

Mr. Hoey said they did not include an incentive, however the first to market is often the one who wins. Businesses may find it is in their favor if they adopt sooner than January 1.

Eric Pfeiffer of 51 Elizabeth Street asked when this comes to a vote if there is any chance that effective date might change.

Mr. Hoey said if they were to change anything in the ordinance they would have to have another public hearing.

Mr. Pfeiffer asked if these businesses have any overstock after January 1, what is keeping them from tossing those bags into the landfill.

Mr. Hoey said he does not know the answer to that, but they have seven months to come up with an answer.

Public Comment

Those who spoke in favor of the ordinance amendment:

Parker Toth of 40 Meadow Street
Catherine Adams of 40 Dromara Road
Scout Climie of 27 Hickory Road
Charlotte Wiley of 69 Davis Drive
Claire Pringle of 34 East River Road
Edward Thurston of 261 Dunk Rock Road
Mary Geyer of 368 Schoolside Lane
Julia Schroers of 401 Three Corners Road
Charlotte Babbin of 28 High Street
Skylar Bartels of 986 Leete's Island Road
Larry Winslow of 24 Long Hill Farm
Kristin Dahl of 7 Fawn Court
Kevin Magee, Town Environmental Planner
Tom Finnegan of 69 Broad Street Extension
Barry Felson of 1231 Moose Hill Road
Marlene Schwartz of 28 High Street
Julia Zupko of 711 Goose Lane
Allyn Brown – Also reminded public about the dangers of balloons to the environment.

Remind people to let the air out when they are done with them and make sure they don't get loose.

Frank Yantorno of 268 Schoolside Lane

Sabine Harris of 607 Long Hill Road – Also GHS Environmental Club Advisor

Keira Stankevich of 250 Tanner Marsh Road (also read a letter in support from her friend Alice)

There were three additional speakers in favor. Earlier in the day letters were received from Sara Edmond of 70 Meadow Hills Drive, Julie Wagner and Sharron Trumpore all in support (they are attached to the minutes). The Selectmen's office also received phone calls from Roslyn Meyers of 50 Old Quarry Road and Diane Grasso of 351 County Road voicing support of the ordinance.

Bill Dwyer of 144 Donald Road said that while he thinks this is an important issue he would rather see time spent educating people instead of passing laws. They need to educate not legislate and teach why plastic is a problem.

Mr. Hoey did a quick poll of those present and all supported the ordinance amendment except Mr. Dwyer.

There was a brief discussion among the board about when to make a decision on this. Since there still would not be a full board until the second meeting in June the board considered not voting until then. After realizing most board members were supportive of the ordinance, it was decided to place the issue on the June 3 meeting agenda.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Mr. Federici and seconded by Ms. Renner, the board voted unanimously to close the public hearing at 9:12 and adjourn the meeting.

*Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner and Federici
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None*

Respectfully submitted,

Traci K. Brinkman

Clerk

Board of Selectmen

Traci Brinkman

From: Sara Edmond <sedmond3@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 28, 2019 1:11 PM
To: Traci Brinkman
Subject: written testimony for public hearing 5/28/2019

Re: "An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the Town of Guilford – Chapter 236, Solid Waste and Recycling."

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in strong support of the proposed ordinance, "An Ordinance to Amend the Code of the Town of Guilford – Chapter 236, Solid Waste and Recycling." We are facing a climate crisis which, if not properly addressed, will result in devastating consequences for our planet, for public health, and for the economy. As a small town, we are limited in our ability to impact this global crisis. A ban on plastic bags is one small step our town can take to take better care of our environment. This proposed ordinance is excellent and as a citizen of Guilford who is concerned about the environment, I wholeheartedly support it.

Sincerely,
Sara N. Edmond, Ph.D.
70 Meadow Hills Drive

Traci Brinkman

From: Sharron <trumpore@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, May 28, 2019 3:16 PM
To: Traci Brinkman; Matt Hoey
Subject: Plastic bag ban

Please strongly support banning this menace to our environment. Let's not leave our future families and families in developing countries to deal with this. Thank you.

Consider that:

PLASTIC BAGS:

- Are made from fossil fuels so CONTRIBUTE TO GLOBAL WARMING
- Usually get tossed after a single use and 20% of them WIND UP IN THE OCEAN
- Get caught in public waterworks and CAUSE FLOODING AFTER STORMS
- Break down into tiny pieces that enter the food chain and ARE TOXIC TO HUMANS
- Trap and are eaten by whales, birds, and turtles and KILL WILDLIFE
- Get loose as litter and ARE A BLIGHT ON THE LANDSCAPE
- Float on currents to far-away places and CONTRIBUTE TO SQUALOR IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD
- Are shipped from the U.S. to poor countries for hand sorting and burning by child labor wastepickers where they CAUSE POLLUTION AND DISEASE
- Accumulate as trash islands that COVER UP TO 8% OF THE OCEAN
- CAN BE REPLACED WITH RE-USABLE SHOPPING BAGS!

Sent from my iPhone

Traci Brinkman

From: Wagner, Julie <juwagner@uchc.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, May 28, 2019 2:48 PM
To: Traci Brinkman; Matt Hoey
Subject: plastic bag ban

Hello,

I am writing to express my strongest possible support for the ban on single use plastic bags that is up for hearing tonight. Below are some facts about single use plastic bags, and an essay I wrote expressing my opinion about a ban.

Please support the proposed ban. Guilford has the opportunity to take a strong lead on this issue along the shoreline which other shoreline towns will follow. Ours are the communities with the most to lose from pollution in the Sound.

Thank you for your service to Guilford.

Julie Wagner, PhD

Professor

UConn Health

Single-use bags take 1,000 years to degrade in a landfill. The U.S. goes through 100 billion plastic shopping bags each year. 12 million barrels of oil is required to make that many plastic bags. Four out of five grocery bags in the US are now plastic.

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- Trap and are eaten by whales, birds, and turtles and **KILL WILDLIFE**
- Get loose as litter and **ARE A BLIGHT ON THE LANDSCAPE**
- Float on currents to far-away places and **CONTRIBUTE TO SQUALOR IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD**
- Are shipped from the U.S. to poor countries for hand sorting and burning by child labor wastepickers where they **CAUSE POLLUTION AND DISEASE**
- Accumulate as trash islands that **COVER UP TO 8% OF THE OCEAN**
- **CAN BE REPLACED WITH RE-USABLE SHOPPING BAGS!**

Do you remember when people smoked everywhere? Not too long ago, although it was a recognized pollutant, smoking was allowed in restaurants, airports – even hospitals. Several things solved that problem, including increasing awareness about the hazards of smoking, taxing tobacco, and banning smoking from public places. Smoke-free laws succeeded in decreasing deaths, including among non-smokers. These laws were passed because of the understanding that second-hand smoke is a public hazard. That is to say, one person's smoke affects everyone else in their surroundings. This speaks to interdependence, i.e., my health and your health and the health of the planet cannot be separated. The problem of plastics is similar. Consider the far-reaching effects of single-use plastic check-out bags. These bags: are made from fossil fuel so contribute to global warming and international conflict; are usually used once and often wind up in the Sound; break down into tiny pieces that enter the foodchain and are toxic to humans; trap, are eaten by, and kill wildlife; clog stormdrains where they promote flooding; float to far away places and accumulate as trash islands that cover up to 8% of some oceans. Closer to home, they contribute to municipalities' financial woes, since Connecticut towns now often have to pay to get rid of non-recyclable waste. Our reliance on single-use plastics is damaging to ourselves, each other, and the environment. To be clear - we need plastic for certain purposes. However, we don't need *single-use* plastic. In fact, we're drowning in it. As with second-hand smoke, solutions for single-use plastic bags must include increased awareness, financial motivations for change, and a ban. Please support Branford's proposed ordinance to eliminate

single-use plastic check-out bags. I look forward to the day when our children ask – incredulously - do you remember when people actually used single-use plastic bags?!