

April 29, 2018

Stamford Board of Representatives
888 Washington Blvd, 4th Floor
PO Box 10152
Stamford, CT 06904-2152



RE: BYO Stamford

Dear Board of Representatives Members,

First of all thank you for taking up the important topic of restricting single use plastic shopping bags in Stamford.

BYO Stamford is a newly formed community group that advocates:

- 1) Banning single use plastic bags
- 2) Incentivizing shoppers to bring their own reusable bags.

The latter could be achieved effectively by charging for bags that would be provided to those who forget to bring their own bags.

BYO Stamford realizes the challenges of a charge as Stamford residents have not been used to charges of this nature.

Given that many environmentalists and retailers alike see serious issues with regard to wide consumption of single use paper bags as well, a charge in order to incentivize shoppers to bring their own bags needs to be considered. BYO Stamford believes that there is significant evidence that proves that charges can be highly effective in changing shoppers' behaviors and result in significant reduction of single use bag consumption.

Successful results have been seen in California, Washington DC, Chicago, IL, and in various countries around the world. Often shoppers in communities that have adapted charges get used to bringing their own bag rather quickly. This behavior becomes second nature, and after a short while, is no longer viewed as an inconvenience.

BYO Stamford intends to reach out to as many Stamford residents as we can, raising awareness and educating shoppers. As a first step we have started a survey for all Stamford residents to take.

As of April 29th, 108 Stamford households took this survey. These households represent 304 Stamford residents from all 20 districts. 75% of responding households favor a ban on single use plastic bags. It should be noted that a majority, 45% of all households asked also favor a charge for paper bags, in combination with a single use plastic bag ban. 30% are in support of a ban but do not favor the charge and 25% oppose the ban altogether.

Here are a few comments we received in the survey:

From those who oppose the ban:

“I don't think it is appropriate to legislate whether or not a consumer is required to use their own or a paid-for reusable bag. That should be the choice of the individual.”

And:

“I live in an apartment and will not be able to just carry around a bag or many bags when walking around my neighborhood on the off chance I buy something. Ridiculous hardship”.

Comments from those who favor a ban but are not in favor of the charge read as follows:

“I think we should head towards a total ban in a staged approach. Putting one in effect immediately will be challenging for some.”

And “If you bring your own bag you should get a 10 cents refund which gives more of an incentive.”

Finally, here are some quotes from respondents who favor both the single use plastic bag ban and a charge on paper bags:

“Europe and Australia have been charging for bags for 10+ years. The US needs to adapt and become environmentally conscious.”

And: “There are way too many plastic bags littered around Stamford and they are given out far too freely by stores, particularly the larger chains who put one thing in them when they are packing for you! People will soon get into the habit of bringing their own or paying a small charge - look at the whole of Western Europe if you want to see a success story.”

“Ban all bags - I come from CA it works there.”

And: “This will push people to remember their reusable bags. I own a bunch and forget them most often. I know I would be one who would remember as a result of this ban.”

There are many more interesting comments but it is worth pointing out that the majority of those that responded is in favor of both, the ban and the charge. Regardless of today's L&R meeting's outcome, BYO Stamford is dedicated to raising awareness among Stamford residents and is convinced that a hybrid model including a single use plastic bag ban plus a charge for paper bags ultimately is the right and smart way to address our unnecessary bag waste problem.

We are looking forward to working with the Board of Representatives and all Stamford residents on this very important topic.

Respectfully Submitted,

- BYO Stamford