

Proposed Plastic Bag Ban Will Be Bad For Portsmouth

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Apr 06, 2015(Granite Grok: <http://granitegrok.com/> Delivered by Newstex) <http://granitegrok.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/paper-or-plastic-tote.jpg>Portsmouth has a Blue Ribbon Committee on Sustainable Practices and like any good committee it must forever practice things that sustain the committee. To that end the busybodies have identified the next great environmental evil.

Single-use plastic **bags** are bad for Portsmouth (and the world!).[1] They plan to submit a proposal to the City Council to establish an ordinance to reduce their use and eventually (we must presume) eliminate them. The practical term for this is a **bag** ban (or Plastic **Bag** Ban) and it is one of those moments **in** the life of a municipality when you should realize that your city is at risk of being controlled-or is already controlled-by a pack of numbskulls.Committee Chairman Bert Cohen states **in** a letter to Mayor Robert Lister and the City Council that the proposed ordinance 'will positively affect the city's impact on the earth's natural sustainable system **in** several ways.' No, actually it won't. Not one of the assumptions for banning single-use thin film **bags** can be substantiated by actual evidence. There is no substantive or supporting science. It is all rumor, assumption, and misinformation. Almost every one of the claims, perhaps all of them (I may not know what all the supposed ban benefits are), have been proven to be of little or no benefit to the municipality or the environment and bad **in** ways we shall explore here. One of the most egregious evils is that the suggested alternatives to thin film plastic **bags**, because you have to replace them with something, are all demonstrably worse for the environment than the **bags** the busy-bodies environmental numbskulls want to ban. Thin film plastic **bags** have the lowest amount of environmental impact[2]. For an equivalent amount of groceries,production of paper **bags** requires three times as much total energy and recovers only 1 percent of that energy through combustion. Paper **bags** also produce substantially more landfill waste. For an equivalent amount of groceries, single-use plastic **bags** produce15.5 pounds of waste while paper **bags** produce nearly 75 pounds of waste. Paper **bags** also produce more greenhouse gases. Plastic **bags** generate 68 percent fewer greenhouse gases than composted paper **bags**. Plastic **bags** consume 71 percent less energy during production than paper **bags**. Reusable **bags** may be the worst of all. Such **bags** need to be used 104 times to be less polluting than plastic **bags**. However, such **bags** are used only 52 times on average. **In** a UK study [3]I previously p<http://granitegrok.com/blog/2012/06/1-a-plastic-bag-ban-by-the-way-reusable-bags-might-be-worse-for-the-environment>sted here we found that any effort to reduce environmental impact from '**bags**' used to carry purchases from stores should not include encouraging people to change to reusable **bags**.Nor are the synthetic alternatives to cotton 'reusable **bags**' any better. And most reusable **bags** are made overseas while the plastic thin film **bags** are made primarily **in** the United States. And what about Marine life. Portsmouth's Blue Ribbon Committee on Regurgitating Environmental Nonsense was acutely concerned for Marine life. Cohen's letter states that the proposed ordinance would lessen the city's contribution 'to the serious consequences broken down plastics present to all marine life.' 'The ordinance would also bring heightened public awareness to other every day practices that adversely impact the earth's natural sustainable system,' Cohen states **in** the letter. There is no concrete evidence that a change **in** land based use of thin film plastic **bags** would have any impact on what actually ends **up in** the Ocean but the general consensus is that if they do end **up in** the water they do not present any sort of meaningful threat to marine life. (Report.pdf [4]or follow links where provided.) [T]he National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) points out that there is no scientific evidence to support even the first claim (that large amounts of marine debris originate on land), noting that 'We know relatively little about what is lying on

Proposed Plastic Bag Ban Will Be Bad For Portsmouth

the ocean floor or suspended in the water column. Because of this we truly can't say what the land- and ocean-based percentages are with any certainty or accuracy.' -National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Frequently Asked Questions: All about Marine Debris, October 2009, p.2. David Santillo, a senior biologist with Greenpeace, told a reporter at The Times of London: 'It's very unlikely that many animals are killed by plastic bags. The evidence shows just the opposite. We are not going to solve the problem of waste by focusing on plastic bags. With larger mammals it's fishing gear that's the big problem. On a global basis plastic bags aren't an issue.' - Time UK[5] David Laist, an expert on entanglement and since 1979 an analyst for the Marine Mammal Commission told The Times that: 'In reality plastic bags don't figure in entanglement. The main culprits are fishing gear, ropes, lines and strapping bands. Most mammals are too big to get caught up in a plastic bag. the impact of bags on whales, dolphins, porpoises and seals ranges from nil for most species to very minor for perhaps a few species. For birds, plastic bags are not a problem either.' Sources CA Here[6]; AU Here[7]; Time UK[8] Wildlife entanglements of any sort are infrequent (and far less dangerous than wind turbines are to bats and birds), so with being of little or no benefit to marine life and the replacements worse for the environment, are there any advantages to banning single use thin film bags? That depends on what you mean by benefit, and I think we've shown here that there are none, but when you are part of the Portsmouth Blue Ribbon Committee on Sustainable Practices you might need to fall back on platitudes and they have. 'The ordinance would also bring heightened public awareness to other every day practices that adversely impact the earth's natural sustainable system,' Cohen states in the letter. The sad truth is that in San Francisco, a place presumed to be top heavy with busy-body liberal environmentalists proudly spewing left-wing narratives, even after years of having a plastic bag ban in place, people are leaving more than their hearts there. Just two years after the San Francisco ban went into effect there were more plastic bags in the waste stream than before the ban, and during the great recession, no less. <http://granitegrok.com/wp-content/uploads/San-Francisco-waste-stream-audit.jpg> Yes, some might argue that without the ban the problem would be worse, but then those same people have argued all the other things we've identified as incorrect and they will continue to do so, suggesting that their priorities are misguided at best. At worst, they are pushing the ban to appear municipally trendy and hip, making this yet another environmental Potemkin Village. But on a positive note this is not like the other environmental Potemkin Villages that take ten other villages to prop up their green boondoggles. The bag ban has been proven to drive commerce, jobs (and that means money) away to neighboring municipalities. The LA plastic Bag Ban had an immediate impact on both the sales of retailers and employment [9]with regard to businesses who had to comply versus competitors outside the area of the ban who did not. County leaders assumed that the ordinance would eliminate the use of plastic bags and leave consumers with two choices: 1) shoppers could bring a personal reusable bag or other container to carry their goods, or 2) consumers could pay for a paper bag, with the fee acting as a penalty or deterrent to this option. They failed to consider a third option: that consumers would shop at stores unaffected by the ban that is, stores in the incorporated areas of Los Angeles County. They did not consider the possibility that commerce would migrate, or be displaced, due to the law. Businesses that had to enforce the ban saw decreases in business and employment while those outside the affected area saw their business and job opportunities increase. So if Portsmouth institutes a bag ban we should expect similar results. Less commerce in the city resulting in fewer jobs, with more commerce and job creation outside the bag ban limits in neighboring towns. If Portsmouth is feeling a bit too prosperous then, by all means, impose a pointless ban on local businesses that accomplishes none of its stated environmental goals (and by all accounts should make matters worse) because the towns around you all stand to benefit at your expense. I wonder if those neighboring towns will have the sense to come and 'speak in support' of the Portsmouth ordinance? Update: I forgot to mention water. Reusable bags waste a ton of water from having to be maintained until discarded, that means laundry detergents, repeated washings, more waste water treatment, and all the energy required to attend to all of the above. And if you forget or simply don't bother cleaning them there are health risks[10] and all the costs and environmental impacts associated with that. Research: There are a lot of studies and research available. Most of it has been aggregated here[11], but you can follow these links to the source reports or other data as needed. Here are the typical lies, myths, and distortions that are used by bag ban supporters: Plastic carryout bags are 'single-use' bags, or plastic carryout bags are only used for 12 minutes on average. Facts: Retail stores purchase plastic carryout bags for a single purpose: to enable shoppers to carry their purchases home. But as with many other items, that does not make it 'single-use.' Everyone knows that these bags can be reused for hundreds of other purposes.[i][12] In fact, the irony of targeting grocery bags for a ban is that they are likely the MOST repurposed and reused product that people bring into their home! People use them for everything from trash can liners to disposal of used diapers to containing wet bathing suits after a swim to storing leftover parts. Plastic

Proposed Plastic Bag Ban Will Be Bad For Portsmouth

Carryout **Bags** should be banned because few are Recycled. Fact: The recycling rate is less than 5% using the State of California statistics for the **In-Store Recycling Program**[iii][13] http://stopthebagban.com/Lies%2C-Myths%2C-and-Distortions.php#_edn2 and about 14.1% using statistics from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).[iii][14] What **bag** ban proponents conveniently forget to tell you is that according to a life cycle study by the UK Environment Agency that 76% of all plastic carryout **bags** are reused and that 40.3% are reused as waste bin liners and to pick **up** pet litter. **In** addition, the study claims that reusing a plastic carryout **bag** as a trash **bag** is actually beneficial to the environment because it avoids the manufacture and purchase of another plastic **bag**. [iv][15] Littered plastic carryout **bags** are carried by storm water into storm drains, the river, and end **up in** ocean where they harm marine wildlife. Fact: It is widely accepted that 80% of all plastic debris, including plastic carryout **bags**, comes from land based sources and is conveyed to the ocean via storm drains and rivers.[v][16] What **bag** ban proponents fail to tell you is that communities are already spending hundreds of thousands of dollars installing full or partial capture devices **in** storm drain catch basins, inlets, and outfalls so that the vast majority of littered **bags** can be stopped. These devices will prevent all trash, including plastic **bags** and plastic debris, harmful to marine wildlife from flowing into creeks and rivers and making its way to the ocean.[vi][17] Efforts should be made at stopping, capturing, and collecting ALL litter, not drastic solutions like completely banning a product because a tiny percentage end **up in** streams. Plastic **bags** must be banned because they are littered. Fact: Plastic **bags** are part of the litter. However, the basic premise of the argument is that EVERYONE should pay because SOME people litter. This is an illogical conclusion. Most of the **bag** ban arguments revolve around dealing with littered plastic **bags**. It is a litter problem they are trying to solve. No efforts are made to try to determine the cause of the litter (such as homeless camps, people visiting a beach, or uncovered garbage trucks), but they jump quickly to the conclusion that all plastic grocery **bags** must be banned. If banning was the solution, then we would need to ban virtually everything, including tires, mattresses, plastic bottles, trash **bags**, and everything else anyone finds **in** the creek. Littered plastic carryout **bags** blow around easily. Fact: True; however this very fact also makes plastic **bags** one of the easiest pieces of litter to capture and collect. Windblown plastic carryout **bags** have a large surface area and therefore a very high probability that the **bag** will get caught on a tree, shrub, stick, rock, fence, or other obstacle before it is swept downstream. **In** fact, it is virtually impossible for a plastic grocery **bag** to make it all the way down a creek to the ocean. Therefore, the probability of a windblown plastic carryout **bag** ever flowing down a creek or riverbed to the ocean is very low. Plastic carryout **bags** kill 100,000 marine animals and a million sea birds every year. Fact: This allegation is false. The claim originated with a misinterpretation of a 1987 Canadian study that concluded between 1981 and 1984 that more than 100,000 marine mammals including birds were killed by discarded fishing nets. The study did not mention plastic **bags**. **In** fact, both the United Nations and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identified 'derelict fishing gear, including monofilament line, trawl nets, and gill nets' as one of the greatest threats to marine life and sea birds.[vii][18] Plastic **bags** are a commonly littered item and account for 14.6% percent of wildlife entanglements. Fact: The statement is misleading. According to the Ocean Conservancy 2010 Report[viii][19] a total of 336 wildlife animals were found entangled **in** Marine Debris worldwide **in** 2010. Out of 336 only 49 or 14.6% were entangled by plastic **bags** including 6 amphibians, 19 birds, 11 fish, 6 invertebrates, 6 mammals, and 1 reptile. The largest cause of entanglement was fishing line with 126 or 37.5% and fishing nets with 82 or 24.4%. The 49 entanglements out of 336 should be kept **in** perspective with the half-million birds including protected species that are killed each year by 'green energy' wind turbines.[ix][20] The Pacific Garbage Patch is twice the size of Texas and consists of floating plastic debris. Fact: False. The Pacific Garbage Patch is neither a patch nor a huge mass of plastic debris floating **in** the ocean. Angel White, an assistant professor of oceanography at Oregon State University states that the patch is about one tenth the size of Texas and consists of small bits of plastic that float beneath the surface.[x][21] Furthermore, the garbage patch consists of small hard plastic pieces, and no plastic **bag** pieces have been found. **In** other words, plastic grocery **bags** have nothing to do with the garbage patch. Plastic carryout **bags** are made from oil. Fact: False. Domestically manufactured plastic **bags** are made out of polyethylene. Ethylene is made from ethane which is a waste by-product from refining natural gas[xi][22] and oil[xii][23]. Ethane must be removed from the natural gas **in** order to lower the BTU value of the natural gas to an acceptable level before it is delivered to **homes** and businesses for fuel. Ethane burns too hot if allowed to remain **in** natural gas and if not used to make plastic (ethylene) it will have to be burned off, resulting **in** greenhouse gas emissions.[xiii][24] By converting ethane into plastic greenhouse gas emissions are reduced. 'Using the ethane to make plastic does not **in** any way reduce the amount of fuel available for transportation or power generation or increase our energy imports.'[xiv][25] The Polyethylene needs to be used and discarded **in** some manner, and plastic grocery **bags** is actually a very excellent and useful method of using **up**

Proposed Plastic Bag Ban Will Be Bad For Portsmouth

the polyethylene by-product. Plastic carryout **bags** are responsible for severe flooding **in** Bangladesh **in** 1989 and 1998. Fact: True and False. The severe flooding that put most of the country underwater was blamed upon plastic carry out **bags** that had blocked drains and sewers. A careful examination of the issue will show that other factors are responsible. **In** many areas of Bangladesh people live **in** slum like conditions. Trash is deposited **in** makeshift dumps, along the road and **in** drainage ditches. Drainage ditches and canals are filled with trash. Less than 50% of all waste **in** urban areas is collected and disposed of **in** landfills.[xv][26] Hence, plastic **bags** were not the cause of flooding but an inadequate infrastructure for trash disposal and flood control. Plastic carryout **bags** can plug **up** storm drains and cause flooding. Fact: True but rare. What plastic **bag** ban proponents do not tell you is that storm drain catch basins are maintained on a regular basis where all trash is removed from catch basins and trash excluder devices and properly disposed of **in** the landfill. **In** addition, **in** the event of heavy rains, flood control personnel are on duty to handle situations that may come **up**. And they ignore the major source of storm drain plugging: leaves! We should be banning trees instead of plastic **bags** to keep storm drains clear! Californians use 20 Billion Plastic Carryout **Bags** per year (500 per person). Fact: No one knows how many plastic carryout **bags** are used by residents of California per year. The 20 billion number is derived from the estimated weight of plastic carryout **bags** **in** California landfills by dividing the estimated weight by the weight of a single grocery **bag**. The weight is corrupted by the inclusion of dry cleaning **bags** which are heavier than grocery **bags**. Also, since the size and weight of plastic carryout **bags** from different retailers vary, the method used to calculate the number of **bags** will result **in** erroneous data. Using this same method of calculating plastic **bag** quantities from the weight of plastic carryout **bags** distributed and reported by stores to the State of California under AB 2949/SB 1219 results **in** only **9** billion[xvi][27] plastic carryout **bags**! **In** addition, common sense should be applied. Is it believable that an average family of 4 uses 2000 plastic grocery **bags** per year (40 per week)? It is more likely about half that number. Plastic carryout **bags** do not decompose **in** landfills and will last thousands of years. Fact: True, but what is not mentioned is that nothing much else decomposes **in** a landfill either. Modern landfills are tightly compacted to create a low-oxygen environment that inhibits decomposition. Modern landfills act like vast mummifiers. [xvii][28] Because plastic **bags** do not decompose **in** landfills means that they do not produce greenhouse gases during the decomposition process like paper **bags** will. Hence, that is an environmental benefit. Plastic carryout **bags** take **up** space **in** landfills. Fact: False. Plastic carryout **bags** used as trash **bags** or to dispose of litter take **up** less space than traditional plastic garbage **bags**. Plastic carryout **bags** that are empty should have been recycled rather than discarded **in** the landfill. Also, paper **bags** and reusable **bags** take **up** more space and landfill volumes than the plastic **bags** they replace. And as mentioned previously, if the polyethylene is not used for plastic grocery **bags** it will be used for something else, and still end **up** **in** landfills **in** some form. Plastic Grocery **Bags** are a significant part of litter and money will be saved. Fact: Not quite true. City, county, and state governments spend millions of dollars every year to clean **up** litter. What **bag** ban proponents don't tell you is that plastic carryout **bags** make **up** less than 1% of all litter and will not result **in** an appreciable reduction **in** litter and therefore litter cleanup budgets cannot be reduced. Every dollar spent by jurisdictions to implement a **bag** ban and every dollar spent by residents to purchase carryout **bags** is basically wasted, since the amount of litter is not significantly reduced. **In** fact, it can be quickly shown that all of the cost to implement and comply with **bag** bans ends **up** costing well over \$10,000 per plastic **bag** saved from the litter stream. This money could be used much more efficiently **in** a broad based litter removal effort rather than trying to ban single items. **Bag** bans are good for the environment. Fact: False. Banning plastic carryout **bags** results **in** an increase **in** paper **bags** usage from about 5% to 30%. Paper **bags** weigh more, cost more to manufacture and transport, are seldom reused, and take **up** more space **in** landfills than plastic carryout **bags**. Furthermore, factors such as extra **trips home** to pick **up** reusable **bags**, or more frequent **trips** to the store because the consumer does not have enough **bags**, or the energy to wash reusable **bags** are never considered. People are exposed to higher bacteria levels **in** the **home** than are present **in** reusable **bags**. [xviii][29] Fact: True, but that is not the point. The point is that bacteria and E. coli **in** a reusable **bag** transfers to a packaged food item on the way **home**, and when the package is opened, the bacteria transfers to your hands and to the food item such that when ingested could make you ill. Most people prepare food items not on the kitchen counter but on a cutting board or plate or pan that has been washed **in** the dishwasher and sanitized. [xix][30],[xx][31] Reusable **bags** must be washed and sanitized on a regular basis, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC).[xxi][32] Also, when is it logical to compare sanitation concerns with the worst possible case? One always wants to be as safe as possible around food items. The people are too stupid to see things our way, so a law is required to restrict them. Fact: Millions of people freely choose to use plastic **bags** on a daily basis. No one forces anyone to use a plastic **bag**. Businesses are not forced to offer plastic **bags**. **Bag** ban proponents feel that

Proposed Plastic Bag Ban Will Be Bad For Portsmouth

the public has not freely accepted their 'the sky is falling' arguments against plastic **bags** and that everyone should give them **up** because of the bad few people who litter them, and therefore seek to curtail the rights of individuals and force them to comply to their lifestyle. Plastic grocery **bags** could disappear tomorrow if they could convince everyone it is needed. But they can't, so they seek to forcefully regulate the people against their will. This is the basic fact of **bag** ban laws. San Jose saw an 89% reduction **in** plastic **bag** litter after the **bag** ban. Fact: Misrepresented. First of all, the areas surveyed were actually different between the survey years. Also, non-plastic grocery **bag** trash also was reduced by 30% **in** those survey areas, which was unexplained. Furthermore, they only measured the number of **bags** cleaned **up**, NOT the number of **bags** that remained **in** the environment after cleanup. Thus it is not a valid measurement of impact to the environment. But **in** reality, OF COURSE plastic grocery **bags** were reduced, the city banned 1 million people from getting them! The main question is the cost/benefit analysis. For the millions of dollars **in** personal costs to the people of San Jose to comply with a **bag** ban, they could have hired an army of plastic grocery **bag** collectors whose single job was to go out and pick **up** only plastic grocery **bags** every day! **Bag** Bans are sweeping across the state, and everyone is getting on board. Fact: **Bag** bans are being implemented by city officials on their people. City council members are under pressure to look as 'green' as other cities around them. Yet the people NEVER GET TO VOTE on this issue. **Bag** bans are being passed by city council members who 'feel' it is the 'right' thing to do, or simply to make a statement, and they ignore the facts or cost to their citizens. Public comments and private conversations with people show a huge percentage of the population (typically about 60%) oppose **bag** bans and hate them. This is not a popular movement, only a political movement. Anyone opposing **bag** bans works for the plastics industry or 'big oil,' or hates the environment. Fact: This is completely false. There are multiple citizens groups that oppose **bag** bans. People **in** those citizen groups care about the environment, never litter, take and use only the plastic **bags** they need, and reuse virtually all of the plastic **bags** they bring **home**. Online bulletin boards are filled with citizens decrying **bag** bans. People oppose **bag** bans because they do not make sense, the cost/benefit analysis does not add **up**, and it is an example of nanny-state government at its worst. [i][33] Van Leeuwen, Anthony, 23 December 2012. 'Why Not To Ban Plastic Carry Out **Bags**'. Page 6. 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Proposed Plastic Bag Ban Will Be Bad For Portsmouth

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Proposed Plastic Bag Ban Will Be Bad For Portsmouth

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