

CITY OF BETHLEHEM

City Council Memorandum

SUBJECT: Resolution in Support of Legislation to Reduce or Eliminate the Distribution, Use and Discarding of Single-Use Plastic Bags

TO: Members of City Council

FROM: J. William Reynolds, Member of City Council

DATE: October 4, 2019

Dear Council Colleagues,

Thank you for the commitment you have shown to our community's climate action and sustainability efforts over the past two years. As liaison to the Environmental Advisory Council, I have had the pleasure of attending several of their meetings over the past year. Our conversations often include an appreciation for the support that Councilmembers and the Administration have provided on issues relating to climate action in the City of Bethlehem.

I also applaud the Administration for drafting a Resolution in support of the statewide single use plastic bag ban. The Resolution is well-written, encompasses all of the important aspects of the environmental effects of single use plastics, and I would hope that City Council will pass it unanimously. I will, however, encourage Council, the Administration, the EAC, and our community to continue to investigate supplemental ways in which we can reduce the use of single use plastics. Even if a state-wide ban goes into effect (or local municipalities are given the opportunity to pass their own bans), great consideration should be given to additional efforts to reduce usage of single use plastics through public education campaigns and strategies.

City Council frequently has conversations about the limitations/frustrations of enforcement due to a variety of factors including the nature of the violations being enforced. This is an opportunity to have the conversation before an ordinance (or a state law) is passed to discuss how we are going to make sure the goal – reduction of single use plastics – is reached. Thank you again for your consideration of this resolution, as well as your past, current, and future efforts to build a sustainable Bethlehem.

Please feel to contact me with any questions.



J. William Reynolds, Member of City Council

CC: Members of Council Senator Lisa M. Boscola
J. Spirk, Jr., Esq. Representative Steve Samuelson
Governor Tom Wolf Representative Jeanne McNeill
Mayor Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council

RESOLUTION OF COUNCIL OF THE CITY BETHLEHEM IN SUPPORT OF
LEGISLATION TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THE DISTRIBUTION, USE AND
DISCARDING OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAGS

WHEREAS, City Council of the City of Bethlehem, of both Lehigh and Northampton Counties, Pennsylvania desires to acknowledge the adverse environmental consequences of the distribution, use and discarding of single-use plastic bags;

WHEREAS, strong evidence exists that single-use plastic bags cause harmful effects to land, air or marine animals, spoil fragile ecosystems, create hazards for the marine industry, and burden municipal public works operations;

WHEREAS, according to the Center for Biological Diversity, Americans use 100 billion plastic bags a year and the average family takes home 1,500 plastic bags annually at an estimated cost to retailers of \$4 billion;

WHEREAS, single-use plastic bags are harmful because they do not fully degrade in our oceans or land environment, and they introduce unsafe chemicals into our environment;

WHEREAS, the expansive usage of single-use plastic bags and their typical disposal rates create an impediment to the City's waste reduction and recycling goals while creating unsightly litter;

WHEREAS, the City of Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council determined that it costs approximately \$4,000 to recycle one ton of plastic bags and the resulting products can be sold on the market for only around \$32;

WHEREAS, single-use plastic bags are difficult to recycle and frequently contaminate material that is processed through the City's curbside recycling and composting programs;

WHEREAS, a survey on the banning of plastic bags conducted by the City of Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council suggested an 80% positive or neutral response on the part of city businesses;

WHEREAS, single-use plastic bags are not necessary to retail commerce and reusable bags are considered to be the best among many alternatives to reduce waste and litter, protect wildlife, and conserve resources;

WHEREAS, Council of the City of Bethlehem regards new legislation designed to mitigate or eliminate the harm caused by the distribution, use and discarding of single-use plastic bags to be in the best interest of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, including all of its municipalities, but a legislative moratorium on local ordinances to remedy the problem, recently enacted by the General Assembly, is in effect and binding on local municipalities; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Bethlehem desires to express its strong support for the reduction or elimination of single-use plastic bags in order to mitigate or eliminate the harm caused by their distribution, use and discarding carelessly into the environment or directly into municipal waste streams.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Bethlehem that it urges:

1. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to enact legislation with statewide effect implementing measures consistent with the above designed to mitigate or eliminate the harm caused by the distribution, use and discarding of single-use plastic bags; and

2. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enact legislation lifting the moratorium and authorizing local municipalities to adopt ordinances implementing measures consistent with the above designed to mitigate or eliminate the harm caused by the distribution, use and discarding of single-use plastic bags.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of the Resolution shall be sent to the Governor and elected state officials representing the Lehigh Valley.

Sponsored by: _____

ADOPTED by Council this ____ day of _____, 2019.

President of Council

ATTEST:

City Clerk