

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 09-0179R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Clarke, Henry, Middleton, Kraft, Curran, Conaway

Introduced and read first time: December 10, 2009

Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Public Works

Committee Report: Favorable

Adopted: February 22, 2010

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING

1 Carryout Plastic Bag Waste – Department of Public Works Study

2 FOR the purpose of calling on the Department of Public Works to study the amount of waste
3 generated due to the use of plastic carryout bags, and the environmental impact of carryout
4 plastic bag use, in Baltimore and to report the results of this study to the City Council by a
5 specified date.

6 Recitals

7 There is increasing awareness, both nationally and in Baltimore, that plastic carryout bags can
8 have serious impacts on the environment. Nationwide, these bags are rarely recycled and
9 therefore disproportionately enter the waste stream as either trash or litter. Since plastic bags
10 generally do not biodegrade, they therefore have a tendency to linger - clogging landfills when
11 collected as trash and becoming a permanent part of the landscape when released as litter.

12 Littered plastic carryout bags are not only unsightly, they also can create more significant
13 problems. Substantial resources must be expended in clean-up efforts to clear bags from streets,
14 streams, and parks. When not collected, plastic bags can contribute to urban blight by filling
15 vacant lots or float downstream to pollute marine habitats and harm wildlife. Plastic carryout
16 bags also have a tendency to enter storm drains where they can cause serious clogging that
17 undermines the effectiveness of citywide drainage systems.

18 In order to mitigate these harms, many jurisdictions have enacted laws restricting the use of
19 plastic carryout bags, encouraging recycling, or supporting efforts to expand the use of reusable
20 bags. A key to determining which of these efforts will prove worthwhile and successful in any
21 given community is a clear understanding of the precise ways that plastic bags impact that
22 community.

23 Accordingly, in order for the City of Baltimore to determine what measures would be
24 appropriate to address the problems associated with carryout plastic bags, a clearer picture of
25 how these bags currently affect our communities is needed.

26 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
27 Department of Public Works undertake a study of the environmental impact of carryout plastic
28 bag use in the City of Baltimore. This study should include, at a minimum, information about

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken by amendment.

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1 the number of carryout plastic bags used annually in the City, the amount of these bags collected
2 by the City annually as waste products, how carryout plastic bags in the Baltimore waste stream
3 are disposed of, the percentage of carryout plastic bags recycled in Baltimore, the amount and
4 impact of litter resulting from carryout plastic bags, and an overview of where the impacts of
5 littered carryout plastic bags are most severe.

6 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That the Department of Public Works is called on to report
7 the results of this study, in writing, to the City Council on or before June 30th, 2010.

8 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
9 Director of Public Works, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.