


FROM	NAME & TITLE	David E. Scott, P.E., Director	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Public Works 600 Abel Wolman Municipal Building		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL 09-0179R		

DATE: January 4, 2010

TO

The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
c/o Karen Randle
Room 400 - City Hall

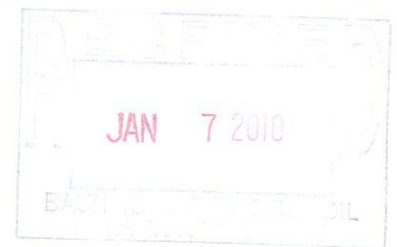
I am herein reporting on City Council Resolution 09-0179R introduced by Council Members Clarke, Henry, Middleton, Kraft, Curran, and Conaway.

The purpose of the Resolution is to call on the Department of Public Works to study the amount of waste generated due to the use of plastic carryout bags, and the environmental impact of carryout plastic bag use, in Baltimore and to report the results of this study to the City Council by a specific date.

The City Council is considering two bills that touch upon the concern for carryout plastic bags: City Council Bill 08-0205, an ordinance that would prohibit certain retail stores from providing carryout plastic bags to its customers; and City Council Bill 08-0208, an ordinance that would impose a \$0.25 surcharge on carryout plastic bags to be paid by the customer, collected by the retailer, and remitted to the Director of Finance. A third bill, City Council Bill 08-0209, would impose a similar \$0.25 surcharge on carryout paper bags. All three bills would encourage the use of reusable bags and discourage the use of paper or plastic carryout bags. The Maryland Legislature considered two bills in their 2008 Session that would have required the Maryland Department of the Environment to produce a report on the feasibility of a pilot project to educate consumers about the impact of plastic bags and reduce their use (HB 908), and a bill that would have banned the use of carryout plastic bags in Maryland (HB 967). Both bills received unfavorable reports by the House Environmental Matters Committee.

City Council Resolution 09-0179R asks that the Department of Public Works conduct a study of the environmental impact of carryout plastic bags and the problems associated with these bags on our communities. The scope of the requested study would include an analysis of the number of carryout plastic bags used annually in the City, the amount of these bags collected as waste and how they are disposed of, the percentage that are recycled, the impact of these bags on littering in Baltimore and where this littering is most severe.

Comments

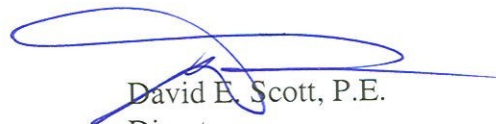


The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
January 4, 2010
Page 2

When recycling was in its infancy in Maryland and in Baltimore, grocery retailers were encouraged to provide their customers with blue plastic bags that residents could use to contain their used glass and plastic containers for recycling. Many residents also used the bags to contain their garbage, thus avoiding the cost of purchasing garbage bags. Today, with the advent of Single Stream recycling and once a week collection of recyclables, residents are asked to contain their recyclables in paper bags, cardboard boxes, City recycling bins, or containers of their choice that are clearly marked for recycling collection. Plastic bags are no longer an acceptable means for placing recyclables out for collection by the City, as the bags become ensnared in the recycling company's equipment. However, carryout plastic bags continue to be used as a convenient means for customers to contain their purchases. Some grocery retailers provide a receptacle for customers to return their old plastic bags for recycling and many of these same businesses sell reusable bags for a nominal price.

Carryout plastic bags, like any end use product not appropriately disposed of, are part of the littering of our City, whether in our streets and alleys, caught in fences or trees, or washed into storm drains or waterways. While this Department does not have the means or the budget to conduct a detailed study of carryout plastic bags, a modest analysis that included a combination of general estimates and observations, extrapolated data, and reviews of studies performed by other cities, states, and organizations may be possible to conduct and complete by the June 30, 2010 deadline. Consulting with such groups as the Sustainability Commission and the Cleaner Greener campaign may also yield additional information.

The Department of Public Works looks forward to a discussion of this issue before the Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee.



David E. Scott, P.E.
Director

DES/MMC:pat