



## What is BYOGreenwich?

BYOGreenwich, Bring Your Own Greenwich, is a pro-business, pro-environment community initiative to decrease plastic bag waste and increase reusable bag use in our town.

## Why should our town care?

Single-use plastic checkout bags are one of the top 5 pollutants in Long Island Sound. They have been shown to disperse easily into the environment where they clog storm drains, impede waterways, pollute oceans and entangle and kill marine and wildlife. They photodegrade into small concentrated toxic particles that ultimately end up in our food system. Single-use plastic checkout bags take 10-1000 years to decompose, are not free and are no longer accepted in CT recycling centers.

As stewards of 32 miles of a most valuable estuary, Long Island Sound, it is our responsibility to protect and preserve it for the health and well being of our residents.

By 2050 there will be more plastic (by weight) in our oceans than fish if we do not address the issue. (*World Economic Forum 2016*)

## Our town is not alone:

To date, there are over 40 countries, 320 cities across the country, including 10 nearby towns who have passed regulations promoting reusable checkout bags and eliminating or decreasing single-use plastic checkout bags.

## Our town solution:

**The Reusable Checkout Bag Initiative (RCBI):** An educational and legislative initiative phasing out the use of single-use plastic checkout bags and initiating a 25¢ retail compensation for single-use recycled paper checkout bags.

## Learn before you vote:

### Thursday, January 25th

Take your RTM member to the Movies Night: *BAG IT: Is Your Life Too Plastic?* Greenwich Library, Cole Auditorium, 6:30-8pm

### Thursday, February 1st

Take home assignment: Google "Plastic Bag Pollution" and the "BYOGreenwichNewsroom"

### Thursday, February 8th

Reusable Bag Drive at Town Hall, Drop Off a Bag/ Pick Up a Bag, 10-2pm

### Wednesday, February 14th

Celebrate ♥ LOVE by giving a reusable bag to your loved ones

### Saturday, February 24th

Greenwich Beach Clean Up, location/time TBD (visit [www.byogreenwich.org](http://www.byogreenwich.org) for details) Co-Sponsors: Greenwich Shellfish Commission and Surfrider Foundation CT, GRAB and Greenwich Green & Clean

### Monday, March 12th

Potential date for RCBI Ordinance RTM Vote, Central Middle School, 8pm (please attend to read your statement of support)

### Thursday, March 15th

*Hazardous Beauty Exhibition*, opening night: Greenwich Library, Flinn Gallery, 6pm

### Friday, March 23rd

Friday Films: *A Plastic Ocean*, Greenwich Library, Cole Auditorium, 6pm

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

### Q: How much is this ordinance going to cost our town?

A: The estimated cost to the town of Greenwich is zero additional dollars. The time required in the first year of the RCBI ordinance rollout is estimated to be 40 hours for an existing, full-time employee to monitor and enforce, and will be 12-24 hours in subsequent years. This is supported by findings from BYOGreenwich interviews with authorities in multiple cities and towns already enforcing bag ordinances. Our town Conservation Commission voted to assume the designee role of monitoring and enforcement of the RCBI Ordinance.

### Q: Are reusable bags safe? Won't they harbor germs?

A: A 2010 study by Californians Against Waste shows that reusable bags have no more bacteria than other items you bring home from the store. Using common sense, washing your hands, and washing or wiping down bags when they get dirty, virtually eliminates any risk of illness.

### Q: What bags are affected?

A: Single-use plastic checkout bags will be phased out over a six-month period. Recycled paper checkout bags will be provided at the point of check out and subject to a 25¢ retail compensation. Consumers are encouraged to bring their own reusable bags.

### Q: Why is there a 25¢ retail compensation on recycled paper checkout bags? Is it a tax?

A: A 25¢ retail compensation for recycled paper checkout bags, coupled with a ban on single-use plastic checkout bags, is the most effective sustainable solution for change. The RCBI ordinance is pro-business, pro-environment; the 25¢ retail compensation reimburses business establishments for the costs of procedural changes and providing recycled paper checkout bags to their customers. The retail compensation remains with the business establishment. It is not a tax.

### Q: I already reuse plastic bags, so what's the harm? What will I use instead?

A: While many of us make an effort to reuse our single-use plastic checkout bags, the proliferation, distribution and harmful polluting effects remain the same. Of the trillions of plastic bags a year, 5%-32% find their way into our environment and food system.

The RCBI ordinance prohibits single-use plastic checkout bags; it does not prohibit packaged bags, produce bags, newspaper bags and bread bags that may be used for garbage liners. Pet waste bags are provided at local parks and trails by the Town.

### Q: Will residents on supplemental food programs be adversely affected by this ordinance?

A: Residents participating in the food program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and customers participating in the Supplemental Food (SNAP) program will be given a recycled paper checkout bag, when needed, at no cost.

### Q: Why do we need another law? Isn't an education campaign enough?

A: Studies show that education alone is not compelling enough to change consumer and business establishment behavior on plastic bag use. Several examples are texting & driving laws, seat belt laws, smoking laws and littering laws.

### Q: Who is opposed to this type of ordinance?

A: The largest opposition comes from the fossil fuel, plastics and chemical industries, their lobbyists and from consumers who just don't want to change their habits.

### Q: Do plastic bags biodegrade?

A: No. The biggest problem with plastic bags is that they do not readily break down in the environment, with estimates for the time it takes to decompose ranging from 20 to 1000 years. When exposed to the sun plastic bags photodegrade into smaller pieces to particles – scientist are now finding microscopic plastic particles in the world's oceans and in the tissue of fish.