



Mayor
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January 10, 2013

Kailee Bosch
10520 North County Road 17
Fort Collins, CO 80524

Dear Ms. Bosch,

Thank you for taking the time to write to me about your concern for the community being negatively impacted by the use of plastic bags. Your letter showed much thought regarding the nature of the problem and looked at possible solutions.

You will be happy to know that City Council has also been researching the issue and looking for possible solutions on February 19th. Council will be considering fees and educational solutions to this topic. Please feel free to join us that evening and voice your concerns or support at City Hall, 300 LaPorte Avenue, Building A.

I will take the liberty of forwarding your letter to all of Council to be included in the discussion.

I always appreciate the engagement of our Fort Collins youth in community issues. Thank you for sharing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Weitkunat".

Karen Weitkunat
Mayor

/sek

cc: City Councilmembers
Susie Gordan, Senior Environmental Planner

To Whom It May Concern:

The enclosed letter was written by a 10th grader in Fort Collins, Colorado. This English assignment was a persuasive speech and business letter addressing a controversial or social issue that they care about. If possible, the student would appreciate a brief response.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Poudre High School

201 Impala Dr. Ft. Collins, CO. 80521

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City Manager's Office

Ms. Weitkunat:

The use of plastic is a necessary component of everyone's life in the 21st century, but if you think about it, eventually we won't have this important luxury. I am writing to you about this important subject because I feel Fort Collins can be a much cleaner and more environmentally friendly community. So, why not start making an impact now by cutting down on your use of plastic bags. When you go to the store you might not always remember to bring your reusable bags, but when you do, you are helping your environment and community all in one simple act. Although it might sound difficult to cut down on your use of plastic bags, it is all worth it in the end. Are you aware that it takes 400-1000 years for one plastic bag to disintegrate in to the Earth? Imagine how many landfills that would take to store all of the plastic bags we use each and every day without even thinking about what is really happening. Doing this makes you feel good because you know you are helping an important cause, despite having to pay for reusable bags, and having to take the initiative to wash them every so often. Using reusable bags will lower the impact we have on our environment and the local community.

The use of reusable bags is going to help our local community in many ways. This includes a program at the local Whole Foods Market in Fort Collins, Colorado that donates 10 cents for every reusable bag used in place of a plastic bag to a local school. This is helping our schools to be able to fund and expand the education of our children. It also is helping our local community by not having plastic bags blowing everywhere you go, which makes our community a better place to live which is what many of us strive for everyday. According to the Fort Collins Coloradoan, "Only about 5 percent of plastic bags get recycled" (Hughes) so ask yourself if when you go shopping and use plastic bags, do you really end up recycling them? If you decide to use reusable bags, it is an easy switch and many local retailers sell these bags including: Whole Foods Market, and Vitamin Cottage. You will even find that King Soopers and Walmart also sell these bags. This is a simple solution to a large problem facing our local and global community today.

When you stop using plastic bags you are helping your local and global environments. This use of plastic bags is ruining our environment and we need to do something about this. Plastic bags make up more than 10% of

washed up debris along the US coastline, and over a lifetime if you use mostly plastic bags you have probably used in excess of 22,000 bags. This is more than any human could even imagine, and the impact that this is making on the environment is huge. According to All Things Green "Plastic is over-running our planet. Estimates run as high as one million pieces of plastic per square kilometer (0.6 square miles) floating in specific areas of the Pacific Ocean" To think about how many animals and eco systems this is interrupting is hard.

The sad reality facing our marine life has yet to be described. According to PlanetArk "Tens of Thousands of whales, birds, seals, and turtles are killed every year from mistaking plastic bags for food." Plastic bags that are ingested are impossible to digest and start the slow painful process eventually leading to death. These animals are dying due to a simple product we use everyday and take for granted. So think about it, for every reusable bag you decide to use, you are potentially saving a marine animals life. Plastic bags end up in the water when we are supposedly throwing our plastic bags in the waste. They are actually going to the landfill and then they end up blowing away, or are sent away to China to just be dumped in the ocean and therefore affect the marine wildlife. If we really cared about our marine wildlife than you might ask yourself why would we be doing such horrible things to our environment and wildlife? This does not only affect marine wildlife it can also potentially affect mammals living outside of the water, because they might ingest the bags, or get stuck. So next time you use a plastic bag think about how long you are actually going to use that plastic bag and if it is really worth it. Your life is just as important as any animal's life.

Some drawbacks to using reusable bags are that they are more expensive. Instead of going to the store and spending nothing on a plastic bag, you are paying \$1 or maybe even \$2 on something you just use to carry things. Also, reusable bags need washed at least every couple weeks, or else they will become smelly and dirty. These bags can then produce bacteria, and you do not want to be carrying your food in a place where bacteria is growing. So you do need to take the initiative and wash your reusable bags. The last problem facing the use of plastic bags is affordability. Families that are already struggling financially may not have the resources for the initial purchase of reusable bags nor will they want to pay for each plastic bag they use. These problems facing the use of reusable bags are hard to deal with, but I feel that there are solutions to every problem.

To address these pressing problems that plastic bags have produced we can explore what other cities near us have done. For example, Boulder has addressed this issue with having citizens pay 10 cents per plastic bag used if they do not provide their own reusable bags. If you are wondering where this money will go the City of Fort Collins states "In communities where there is a

charge for bags, fees are typically distributed to grocery stores to keep costs for what they paid to buy disposable bags. The remainder gets remitted to pay the local government for education campaign and store signage, to buy reusable bags for citizens, or to recover the local government's costs to administer and enforce the policy." This will help our local residents that are of the lower socio economic status and provide them reusable bags, instead of having to pay for the use of plastic bags. This will help those individuals feel better about making a difference, and the community will feel better by helping these people. It will also reduce problems that may be associated with people not wanting to always use reusable bags, and possibly shopping in other areas where plastic bags are not banned. The community can also address this issue by giving a large discount for the use of reusable bags. This would abolish the thought of people wanting to pay for plastic bags instead of using reusable bags. This will be an easy way to have people feel like the money that they spent is well worth it because that money will quickly be made up, possibly in even as little as six shopping trips, depending on the amount of bags they use each time.

Thank you for your time. Any consideration of my proposal is much appreciated. Fort Collins is in need of a plastic bag ban and I believe that this can be addressed easily.

Sincerely,



Kailee Bosch
10520 N. County Rd. 17
Fort Collins, CO 80524