

**TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Monday, April 2, 2018
Municipal Complex, Committee Meeting Room, 3rd Floor
100 Ann Edwards Lane, Mount Pleasant, SC 29464**

MINUTES

Members Present: Bob Brimmer, Chairman, Joe Bustos and Kathy Landing

Absent: Rick Crosby (MPW)

Staff Present: Eric DeMoura, Town Administrator; Amy Livingston, Business and Tourism Manager

Mr. Brimmer called the meeting to order at 10:47 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes from the March 5, 2018 meeting

Mr. Bustos moved for approval; seconded by Ms. Landing. All present voted in favor.

2. Public Comments

Pat Sullivan, 1002 Plantation Court, stated that her public comment is her new water bottle (held up metal water canister). She said, “no more plastic water bottles.”

Lia Cabello, 558 Palmetto Battery Way, stated that she owns a company called *Plastic Pollution Solutions* and has been in ocean conservation for more than ten years, half of that being focused on marine plastic pollution. She said she would like to speak about the economics of plastics. She read the following statement:

While consumers are led to believe that plastic bags, Styrofoam containers and straws are free, grocery stores and other establishments bury the costs of these plastics in the price of goods sold. External costs are not accounted for which include waste management costs, taxes

going towards litter cleanup. These litter cleanup costs are borne not only by the Town, but by volunteer organizations spending their weekends cleaning up plastic; costs to other industries that she mentioned in the last Town Council meeting – fishing, tourism, cattle cotton; and, environmental and human health costs. Essentially, the overall social cost of single-use plastics is much greater than the private cost of providing the single-use plastic to the consumer in the first place. Social costs are much greater than the private costs. Not only are these social costs immediate, but they linger well into the future, accumulating from generation to generation. So, we do not just pay the cost here, but our kids and grandkids are going to pay the cost of a bag today, or a straw or a Styrofoam container. One of the topics that has not been discussed is the cost of nanoplastics and is not sure if the Committee is aware of nanoplastics in the food chain. She said they are so small that they can pass through cell walls. This is a newer field of study, but research indicates that nanosized polystyrene can pass through embryo walls and were present in the yolk sacs of juvenile fish. We also have additional research that shows that nanoplastics are passing through the blood brain barrier in fish causing brain damage, which leads to erratic behavior. Single-use plastics, such as bags, straws and Styrofoam containers, account for 25% of all plastics that are produced globally, which right now is just under four hundred million metric tons. Economists stated that three hundred and eight million tons of plastic produced globally, a quarter of which is single-use plastics. The numbers will double in 20 years, so if you think there is a great deal of litter drifting around Mount Pleasant today, think about the growth of the population and the proliferation of these single-use plastics in our community and the trend will continue to follow that growth trend. The plastics industry is eager to continue to put these products that easily leak into the environment into consumer hands. If the Town of Mount Pleasant does not act soon, the chance to do anything at the Municipal level will be taken from us at the State level.

Janna Davis, 1251 Center Lake Drive, said that she has been a Mount Pleasant resident for twenty years. She said that she also oversees the

Ocean Friendly Restaurant Program for the Surf Rider Foundation. She stated that she is a Diabetes Educator and a Registered Dietician. She said in her professional work, she teaches clients the burden on their health of these chemicals. She passed out to Committee members one of the first reviews of the economic burden on the health care costs of these chemicals. She said this study was conducted by a senior study investigator who is an MD, PhD, and she said people can avoid using plastic containers labeled on the bottom with numbers 3, 6 or 7 inside the recycle symbol. She stated that Styrofoam, or EPS Foam, is recycle code #6. We know that these chemicals are harmful. We have done a review, and when we look at the economic costs, she does not know how this cannot be addressed, as well as the healthcare burden. She stated that in reference to the Ocean Friendly Restaurant program, it is a tremendous program that she has been proud to oversee. It is a voluntary program, but there is also a fee associated with it, just as the Aquarium has a fee. If a restaurant wants to be involved in that program and be in their database, they will incur some costs.

Lisa Churchill, 1753 Nantahala, stated that she is a restaurant owner, and this has not been an issue for her at all. She said as more restaurants stop using Styrofoam and plastics, the prices will go down for the alternative products. She said when she opened her restaurant, she started with earth-friendly products, and the prices have since decreased on those products. She does not see an issue with eliminating plastics and Styrofoam. Her restaurant is the Pickled Palate.

Caroline Brabner, 321 East Bay Street, read the following statement:

“First, I would like to thank this committee for the opportunity to comment on the environmentally responsible packaging and products ordinance. The Coastal Conservation League applauds the Town and its residents for considering this monumental step in addressing plastic pollution, and for their thoughtful consideration of the cumulative effects, both benefits and challenges, that would come with the transition. Convenience items like difficult-to-recycle single-use plastic bags, Styrofoam containers, and non-recyclable plastic straws may seem

like cheap and easy options, but the long-term costs to the health of our environment, our wildlife, and ourselves are much greater than we once thought. Even when disposed of properly, these products often blow out of trash cans, garbage trucks, and landfills and cause the same harm they cause when littered. On top of this, we live in a community surrounded by and filled with waterways. When these products are accidentally or intentionally littered, especially from boats or kayaks, they become even more harmful. Many local businesses recognize this danger and have already transitioned away from single-use plastics. Even more have stated they will happily make the switch if the ordinance passes. Successful initiatives like the Strawless Summer campaign, which had nearly 100 participating restaurants, demonstrate the overwhelming interest in moving away from single-use plastics. However, even those who wanted to continue the campaign on their own have reverted back. They need support from local governments and good policy to make the full commitment. Large retailers like Harris Teeter are ready as well, as they have locations all over the country where ordinances have already been passed. Closer to home, our neighbors at Isle of Palms and Folly Beach have shown that as long as there is a level playing field, where all businesses have the same rules, the ordinance will not be an undue burden. The previous Economic Development Committee meeting targeting business participation heard no opposition, and even heard support. We have proactively reached out to Mount Pleasant businesses to gain feedback and the overwhelming majority were in support of an ordinance. The one-year grace period will allow businesses to use their current stock and gradually make the transition at a pace that works for them. Businesses who are ready to go can make the switch immediately. Others that need more time can take the whole year, and even ask for an extension, if needed. The Conservation League offers itself as a resource throughout the transition, to help with education and outreach and utilize our knowledge of other areas undergoing the same process to make Mount Pleasant's transition as seamless as possible. Our harbor contains 7.6 tons, which is 15,000 pounds of plastic. Let's work together as a community to clean up our waterways, protect our wildlife, and limit

our own exposure to the dangerous chemicals associated with disposable plastic products.”

Jim Wright, 2725 Oak Manor Drive, stated that he has a business opening soon called “Primo Hoagies.” When he first read the ordinance that Ms. Landing distributed, his immediate reaction was that it was very sudden. He said he is in the business community and would like to consider himself networked; however, he was completely unaware of this. His initial concern was not that he was against the ban, but against the plastic bags and other types of plastic bags. He said he has never liked them. He said there is a great deal of other litter, which is a people-problem. He lives close to the Highway 41 bridge and what he sees on that road is more than just plastic bags. He sees the careless debris that blows out of the back of pickup trucks, people throwing things out the window—mostly cigarette butts. He said cigarette butts do not dissolve and are in our water, too. He is concerned about having a rational approach to implementing this ordinance. He said there are a number of alternatives and has investigated all the products he uses. He said containers holding food or drinks need to be clear, because people want to see what they are buying or eating. He said there are alternatives for this with recycling. He does not believe we do a great job with recycling in the business community here. He would like for the Town to look at the possibility of options. He is investigating costs himself, as he only has three disposables that would be eliminated that do not have a suitable alternative. He feels that this is being done too quickly.

Marlo Shedlock, 468 Huger Street, said she is the Vice Chair of Surf Rider and Surf Rider has actually adopted the highway from Sullivan’s Island to Mount Pleasant, and they do the cleanups along the marsh and the highway areas. She stated that they have another cleanup scheduled on May 5th if anyone would like to see, firsthand, what is along the roadways and marshes. She said you will be surprised with the amount of trash that is there that is not seen from the road. She said that just because something is in one town, it will make its way to another town. She would encourage everyone to come out and see how much trash is in the

marsh, they will be there from 9 am to 11 am on May 5th. They will be setup on the Sullivan's Island side at Durst Medical and are coordinating setup in a parking lot on the Mount Pleasant side. She said you will be able to pick up reusable bags at either setup area and come out and clean either the Mount Pleasant or Sullivan's Island side.

Cheryl Carmack, 1630 Meeting Street, said that she is the staff scientist and volunteer coordinator of Charleston Waterkeeper and is here to speak in favor of the ordinance. She would like to note that multiple local businesses can and already do comply with similar rules. She stated that Snapper Jacks, the Windjammer, Rita's Seaside Grill, Taco Boy and Lost Dog Cafe do comply and are still in business doing well. She said she feels this will also be the case for Mount Pleasant, as well. She said the ordinance provides local businesses, the Town and conservation organizations a great opportunity to work together to ensure the transition goes as smoothly as possible, and the ordinance also contains a one-year grace period to plan for and achieve compliance, a long list of exceptions for products such as produce bags and pharmacy bags, as well as a hardship exemption. She said Charleston Waterkeeper stands ready to work with the Town and local businesses to educate the public about the new rules and why they are important and how they protect the waterways. She said they would also love to promote the Town's businesses and restaurant community as leaders in solving the plastic pollution problem. She said lastly, she manages and coordinates all of Charleston Waterkeeper's volunteer activities. She personally participates in all the cleanups and sees firsthand the havoc that is created by plastic pollution in our waterways. She said last year she organized 24 litter cleanups, and they removed approximately 14 tons of debris from the local waterways and it was primarily plastic. She said plastic pollution impacts all of us, and this ordinance will go a long way to fixing this problem.

Ken Griffin, 840 Pitt Street, stated that he has been following this issue and wanted to better understand the affordability or not of this ordinance. He stated that he did some of his own research and found

that using online restaurant catalogs, he found that the cost of buying in bulk, the cheapest he found for a plastic fork was approximately 1.5¢ and in the same catalogs, biodegradable alternatives were approximately 3¢ per fork, which is approximately 100% higher. He stated that the Styrofoam clamshells were approximately 8¢ versus 14¢ for the biodegradable alternatives. He said the cost increase in total for a container and two utensils is approximately 9¢ and if you compare this to the cost of the meal, the average cost for the lower end sit-down restaurants is approximately \$12 per person, so the cost increase of 9¢ is less than 1% increase in cost. He said from a competitive perspective, if all restaurants are subject to the same rules, then no one restaurant is unfairly burdened, and there is no comparative disadvantage for anyone who is subject to this ordinance. He said he looked elsewhere (New York, Los Angeles, Austin and Brownsville, TX); whole states in the US and as well as entire countries, have found it within their means, from an affordability standpoint, to make the transition. He said Italy, France, Kenya and even Rwanda, a land-locked country that is still rebuilding their economy after the civil war, have all found the will to ban single-use plastics. He believes that Mount Pleasant can afford to do the right thing. He said giving away single-use plastics that pollute our environment and transfer the environmental, economic and health burden to him and his children and to Council and their children, is not right.

Mr. Brimmer closed the public comments portion.

3. Consideration of an economic development incentive grant

a. Executive Session - discussion of a contractual matter related to an Economic Development Grant

Mr. Bustos made a motion to go into executive session to discuss contractual matters; seconded by Ms. Landing. All present voted in favor.

Committee adjourned into executive session at 11:09 a.m. and reconvened at 11:30 a.m.

Mr. Brimmer stated that no votes or action were taken, and no action is required at this time.

b. Post executive session

Committee may take action on any item listed on an executive session agenda or discussed in an executive session during a properly noticed meeting.

4. Review of proposed ordinance pertaining to environmentally acceptable packaging and products (Ord. No. 18024) as it pertains to restaurants

Mr. Brimmer stated that this was put on the agenda for discussion as it pertains to restaurants and the packaging impact on food service. He took steps to have individuals attend this meeting who may be able to provide information; however, with spring break, they were not able to attend. He stated that he does not want to reopen this up for public comment unless there is a restaurant owner who may be able to provide insight into difficulties with or support for this ordinance in terms of the restaurant industry.

Ms. Landing stated that she would like to stress that there is no question that this is extremely important to address and has used a Tervis tumbler for years. She stated that people have commented that the Tervis tumbler is plastic as well; however, she has been using hers for five or six years, so it does not go back into the environment quickly at all and does not create little. She said that she also has approximately 30 reusable bags between her two family vehicles. She said the issue is – is it important, is it necessary and is it urgent. Yes, it absolutely is. She said her issue is how to go about it. She asked if a Town government mandate is the way to do this. She stated that she did go out and communicate with a number of businesses and said that many of the small restaurants were not English-speaking establishments. She said when you go in and see all the Styrofoam and plastics they are using, and then ask them what they would have to do if they were to change over, they do not appear to understand. She does not believe that people in the community are

aware to the extent that the Town believes they are. She asked if the residents want to have police officers going into businesses and writing a citation to that business, and if not complied within 30 days, going back in to write a second citation with a fine of \$250, and by the 3rd offence, it goes to \$500, then \$700, and then \$750 per day, and the Town will have the right to revoke their business license if they do not keep up with the fines. She asked if it was necessary as a Town government to put something that pits the Town against businesses who may or may not have actually thought this through or are totally aware. She said when visiting her son on spring break she read an article in the local paper about the importance of environmentally friendly packaging, which was led by Dr. Liz O'Connell Chapman. Dr. Chapman is the associate director of the Colorado State University for Environmental Management, with a PhD in this topic and is also in charge of this for the city she was visiting. She stated that the entire article was about that the fact that this should not be a government mandate, but instead a buy-in by the community in a positive way. She said we could take the "Strawless Summer" and the Partners Platinum Program and implement this on a Town-wide basis with Town Council making this very positive. She said we have Town Proud; however, there are only 140 businesses signed up and there are thousands of companies in the Town. She suggested marrying these with the concept of "let's make Mount Pleasant Proud greater", because we did this together. She stated that she designed an entire program around this and will be revealing this to Town Council this week and possibly the newspaper. She is not convinced that doing something where it is mandated, and fines imposed and the threat of losing their licenses, is the way to do this. She said she would like the residents of the Town to know that she is very serious about protecting the environment and does believe that voluntary efforts that are worked on can work and make it a very positive grassroots effort. She stated that she believes we can promote this and April 21st is Earth Day. She said the Town could kick this off immediately and not wait a year.

Mr. Brimmer stated that he is comfortable with the ban on plastic bags and Styrofoam, which are very well documented. He said when you start

to get beyond this, he still has a great deal of questions. He believes the changes made to the ordinance since the original version are moving in the right direction. He said whether there are additional restrictions will be for full Council to decide. He feels that this ordinance is a good step forward.

Ms. Landing stated that one other issue she is concerned about is that we have now heard from a resident who has googled some information online, and she did reach out to the community, but not to the extent of the community she was referring to earlier, who did 1,000 data points, spreadsheets and information. She said even after they completed a great deal of research regarding plastic bags for two grocery stores and thought they had buy-in from the community and passed their plastic ban, they have been fighting it all the way up to the Colorado Supreme Court, along with all the legal costs this incurs. She said although they have won up to the Colorado Supreme Court, it has taken several years at a significant cost to defend why they did this ban. She has heard from businesses in the Town that the cost of these items is not 10% to 15% more, but in many cases the cost of these replacement items is three to five times what it costs. She said her data shows that biodegradable straws are 28 times the cost of plastic straws. She believes more data is necessary. She stated that we could do this as a grassroots project, suggest a co-op for small businesses to purchase in larger bulk the biodegradable items needed.

Ms. Landing made a motion to defer this item for six months in order to gather more data and information and more information out of the community, but instead to kick off a very positive grassroots effort to see how it works, rather than putting a ban in place that rolls out over a year, but it is still a ban and negative connotation.

Motion fails due to the lack of a second.

Mr. Brimmer stated that the ordinance does list very specific exceptions; however, residents have asked about other items they feel should be included. He asked Legal Counsel if this ordinance passes second reading,

each time another exception is discovered, would the ordinance need to be amended each time.

Mr. Pagliarini stated that just so everyone understands the current status, right now the ordinance is in position for final reading which could be addressed at any following meeting Council desires. He stated that it is at that time that amendments will be made, per Town ordinance, meaning there are no amendments at first reading. He said amendments may be taken at the next Council meeting, unless it is deferred to this Committee or other Committees in the future, changes could be referenced. He said there are already a series of proposed changes. He stated that they can come in partial form, full form or however Council wishes and thereafter, it can continuously be amended as time goes on as there are no restrictions.

Mr. Brimmer stated that if this passes final reading and a month later, a business brings up a product that there is no option for, Council then must go back and amend the ordinance each time that occurs.

Mr. Pagliarini responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Brimmer stated that he is envisioning a great deal of revisions to this ordinance and business implications become clear, there will likely be a number of request for exceptions. He is concerned about constantly amending. He asked if there is any other way to address this issue of exceptions that does not require an ordinance amendment each time.

Mr. Pagliarini stated that once an ordinance is approved and executed, it is published into the Town code. He stated that it cannot be kept open and be effective or partially effective, subject to future changes.

Mr. Brimmer asked if the ordinance could be rewritten in a way that is specifically inclusive of the products, as opposed to stating, "this category of products and here are the exceptions", rather than stating "only these products" are banned. He stated that it is more restrictive, but it would prevent having to make exceptions.

Mr. Pagliarini stated that this is a policy decision as to what items Council would like banned, are permissible or subject to some type of exemption. He said all this is under Council's discretion.

Ms. Landing stated that part of her reason for requesting a deferral is that the current bill in front of the South Carolina Senate which is against Home Rule, and which she is not in favor of, if it were to pass now, the deadline of grandfathering in which places such as Folly Beach and Island of Palms, each of which have only one grocery store and a few others that were affected by their plastic bag bans, was January 31, 2018. She stated that the alternative she heard from those that were able to go to Columbia and meet with some of the senators, is if they table this bill for this session and it goes to the next session, then it is likely the date would be amended. This would give the Town some time to be able to do more homework, gather more information, including all these exceptions, and get everything worked out before we go to final reading. She said ultimately a year from now, if the Town could get rid of the polystyrene and plastic in the environment in Mount Pleasant, it would be a win either way it was accomplished. She said the bottom line is: why the rush, why not take the time.

5. Adjourn

There being no further business, meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Ashe

April 2, 2018