



Town of Portsmouth

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MEMORANDUM

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November 28, 2017

To: Town Administrator

Subj: Plastic Bag Survey

Summary

A survey to gather information from the public was started on October 24, 2017 and completed on November 15, 2017. A copy of the survey is in Attachment A. A survey summary, question results data are in Attachment B. Respondent's comments in Questions 6 and 11 are in Attachments C and D respectively.

- A total of 678 people responded to the survey (573 on-line and 105 by hard copy submission).
- Hard copies were made available either by download or drop boxes at the Town Hall, the Free Public Library and Clements' Marketplace.
- The following demographic data was gathered
 - Residents of Portsmouth – 90%
 - Age Groups – Under 25 – 4.7%, 26-55 – 49%, 56 and Over – 45%. 1.2% preferred not to answer.
 - Family Income per year – Less than \$25,000 – 3.1%, \$25,000 to \$50,000 – 10.9%, \$50,000 to \$100,000 – 25.9%, over \$100,000 - 35%. 25% preferred not to answer.
- Confidence Level was greater than 95% and Confidence Interval was less than 5%. No appreciable difference in the results was noted between the various demographic groups.

Taking Customer Bags to the Stores

Question 1 asked if respondents took their own bags *to the GROCERY STORE* when shopping.

- Nearly Half (47.5%) said they took their own bags to the store either All the Time (21.3%) or More Than 75% of the Time (26.3%).
- 37.3% said they took their own bags to the store Less Than Half the Time (18.4%) or Never (18.9%).

Question 2 asked for the same information as Question 1 but for going to stores *OTHER THAN the grocery store*.

- Nearly half (47.9%) said they never took their own bags when shopping at those stores.
- Only 23.6% said they took their own bags either 75 % or more (15%) or always (8.6%).

Use and Disposal of Plastic Bags

Question 3 asked what respondents do with plastic bags they bring home. They were asked to provide multiple responses on what they did with bags. The following were the results.

- I reuse some once (e.g., for animal waste, wet trash, etc.) and then throw them in the trash. 68.1%
- I re-use some of them more than one time before discarding them. 33.5%
- I discard only the ones that are soiled, in the regular trash. 25.4%
- I save the clean ones in a separate container for disposal 35.6%
- I just throw each individual bag in the regular trash 5.2%

An interesting observation is that over 68% of the respondents reuse plastic bags for some useful purpose and will be compelled to find an alternate means if plastic bags are banned. 31% either throw their soiled bags (25.4%) or throw all their bags (5%), individually, directly into the regular trash.

Later Disposal Practices

Question 4 asked about saving bags for later disposal.

- Over half (57.7%) returned their bags to a recycle point. About a quarter (23%) accumulated bags in a separate bag and then disposed of them in the regular trash.
- 19.2% did not save bags for disposal at all.

Plastic Bag Ban Effect on the Environment.

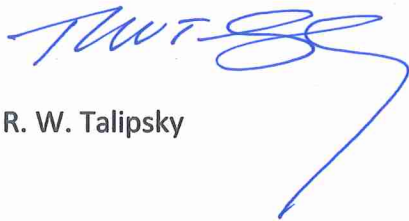
In Question 5, respondents were asked (on a scale of zero to 100) how strongly they felt that the elimination of single use plastic bags would have a positive effect on the environment.

- The average response was 73/100 with responses ranging from zero to 100.
- To show the range and density of responses, a scatter chart is provided in Attachment B.

Note: The problem with this question may be that the respondents were not specifically asked how they thought a plastic bag ban in "Portsmouth alone" would affect the total environment and many respondents may have answered the question with respect to the effect of a wider ban (e.g., National or global).

Support of Plastic Bag Ban

Question 6 asked if the respondent supported the enactment of a ban on single-use plastic bags. Two thirds (66.3%) said "Yes" and about a quarter (23.9%) said, "No". 9.8% were "Unsure".



R. W. Talipsky

Complete Survey Data

Complete survey data is provided in the following attachments

- A. Survey Document
- B. Respondent Summary, Questions 1-6 Data
- C. Question 6 – "Why or Why Not?" comments on "Support for a Ban on Single-use Plastic Bags"
- D. Question 11 – Additional Comments