



# **Conservation Commission Study Report on Single Use Plastics Reduction**

**February 26, 2019**

# Outline

- ▶ Request from Town Council
- ▶ Methodology
- ▶ Findings
- ▶ Recommendations
- ▶ Survey Results
- ▶ Supporting Information

# Town Council Request 2018-224: Plastic Bag and/or Other Plastic Product Reductions

On August 28, 2018 Mayor Granatosky requested the Conservation Commission members return in six months to share with the Council their findings and ideas within the existing ordinances in place.

# Conservation Commission

## Study: Methodology

- ▶ Review existing town ordinances
- ▶ Review other towns' efforts to reduce single-use plastics
- ▶ Review existing literature and studies on the topic
- ▶ Conduct Town of Groton survey of residents and businesses

# Conservation Commission Study: Findings

- ▶ Town of Groton relevant ordinances only address litter and recycling
  - Neither ordinance can directly address reducing single-use plastics
- ▶ Very high support from both residents and businesses to take action on reducing single-use plastics
- ▶ Numerous respondents said they would like to participate with the town in developing a plan to reduce single use plastics

# Conservation Commission

## Study: Findings (cont.)

- ▶ Connecticut has not considered legislation to ban single-use plastics and plastic straws statewide, but in 2017 the legislature considered, but did not pass, a bill to require the state's Recycle CT Foundation, Inc. to educate the public.
- ▶ Gov Lamont budget proposal has 10c 'tax' on plastic bags.
- ▶ As of January 2019 there have been 23 bills introduced to the CT State Legislature that proposed bans on plastic products
- ▶ A number of Connecticut communities are taking or considering action on their own to ban single-use plastic bags at grocery stores to help protect the environment.
  - Currently only Westport and Greenwich have banned single-use plastic bags, but Stamford will soon follow with a ban taking effect in April.
  - Meanwhile, various discussions about bans have been held in recent weeks at meetings in Stonington, New Haven, Hamden, Branford, Guilford, and North Branford, among others.

# Conservation Commission Study: Recommendations

We thank the Council for the opportunity to investigate the need for the possible ban on single use plastics.

If single use plastics are removed from every day use, then they can not become waste issues in the future.

The Conservation Commission recommends the Town Council form an Ad Hoc Committee to investigate and make detailed recommendations utilizing the 106 identified volunteers from the survey on the following issues:

# Conservation Commission Study: Recommendations

- ▶ Actions for the town to minimize the use of single use plastic bags and plastic straws.
- ▶ Plans for expanding the program to include other plastics.
- ▶ Education programs for the citizens and businesses in the town regarding the importance of minimizing the use of plastics.
- ▶ Actions the town citizens and businesses can take immediately to minimize the use of plastics.
- ▶ Plans for expanding the plastics reduction program to the region and state.



# Presented By:

## The Conservation Commission

- ▶ Brae Rafferty - Chairman
  - ▶ Larry Dunn - Vice Chairman
  - ▶ Kristin Distant
  - ▶ Colleen Dollard
  - ▶ Michele Fitzpatrick
  - ▶ Thomas Olson
- 
- ▶ Bruce Lofgren - Staff Liaison

# Conservation Commission Study: Survey Results Summary

1. 63% of Groton Businesses are completely committed to reduce single-use plastics
  - ▶ 32% of Businesses do NOT use single-use plastics TODAY
  - ▶ 31% of Businesses have an interest to participate in developing a Town Plan
2. 72% of Residents responded “very much” and “committed” to support reduce single-use plastics
  - ▶ 55% of residents have an interest to participate in developing a Town Plan

# Conservation Commission Study: Survey Results Summary

## ► Comments

- 79% of comments expressed support, either enthusiastically and without reservation or desiring to work with and improve existing trash, litter and recycling programs
- 14% expressed negative views, divided between those who prefer not to have this regulated by government, have concern that business owners will bear an unfair burden, find other things are more important, and concern for disabled people who must rely on the use of plastic straws
- 6% expressed a desire for more education or information on the topic

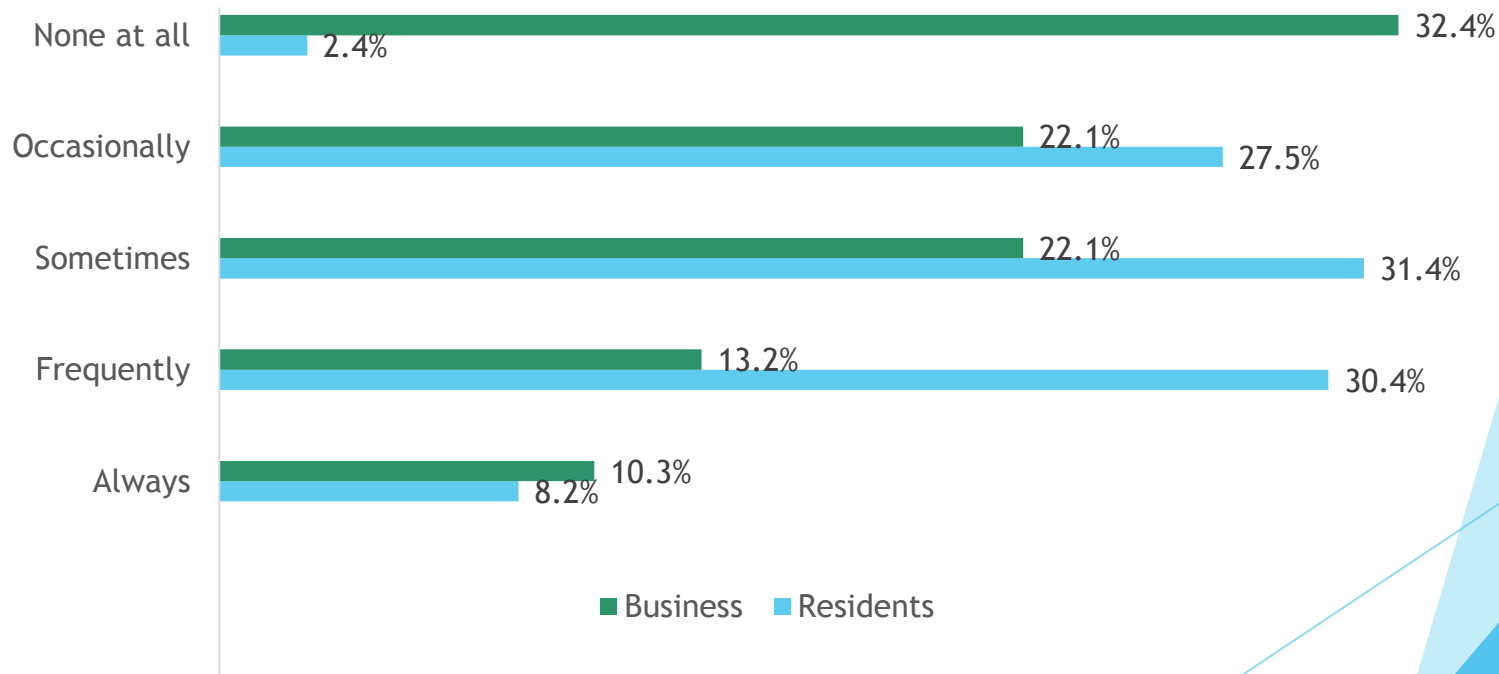
# Conservation Commission Study: Survey Results Details

## Demographics

	#	%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	483	
BUSINESS	68	14%
RESIDENTS	415	86%

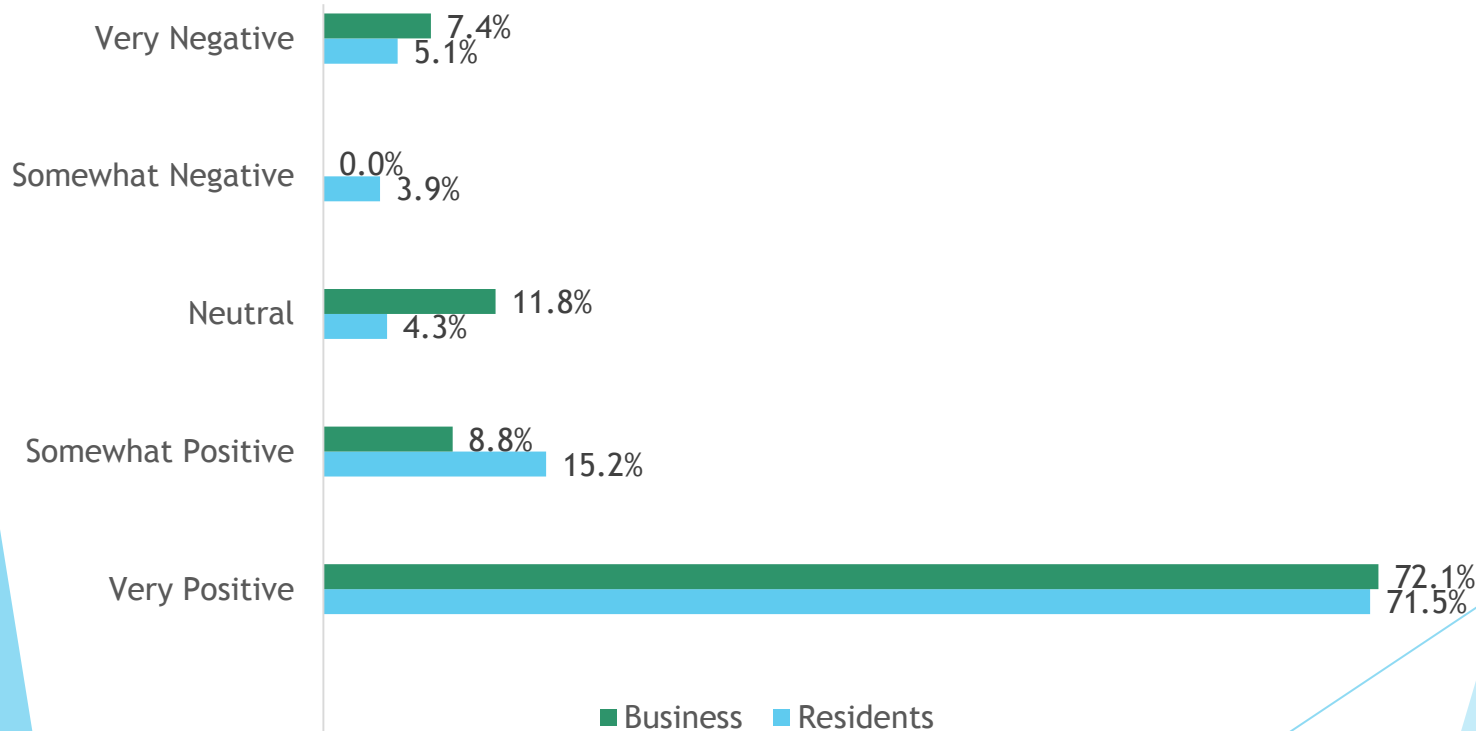
# Conservation Commission Study: Survey Results Details

Q2 - Do you use single-use disposable plastics  
such as straws or plastic bags



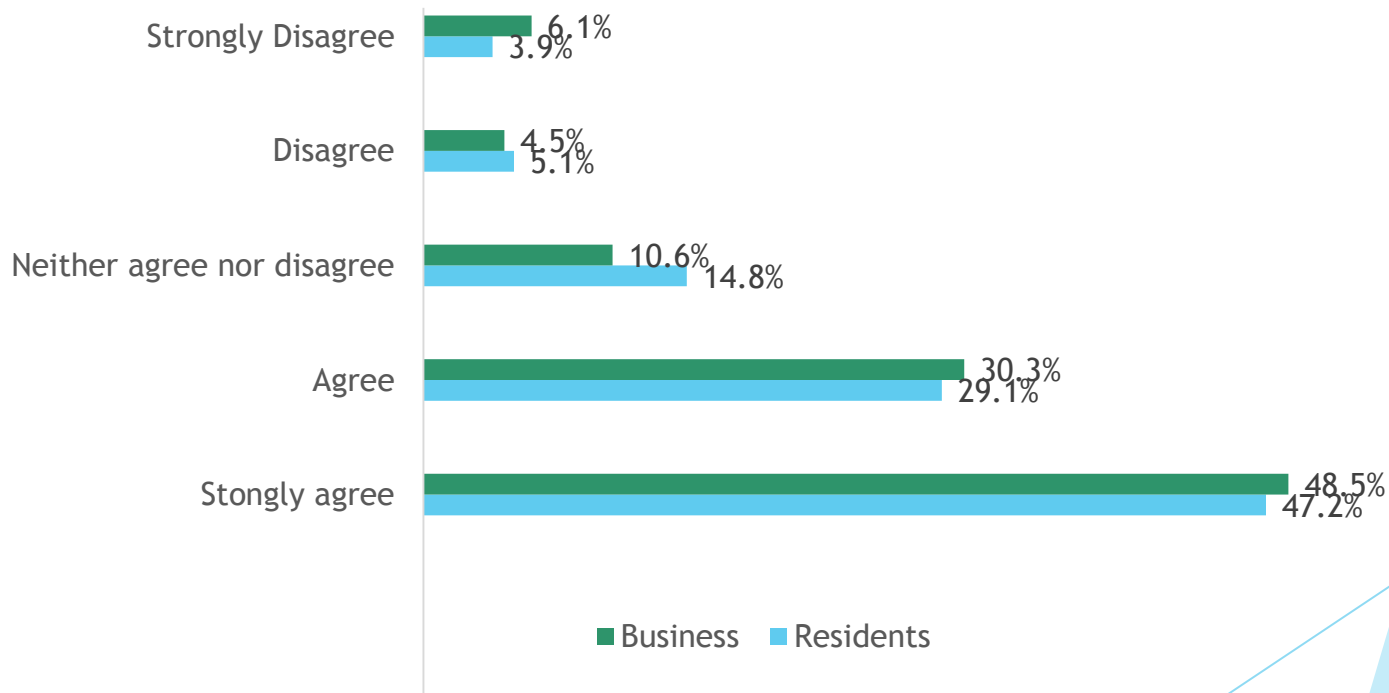
# Conservation Commission Study: Survey Results Details

## Q3 - How Much Would You Support Businesses Reducing Single-use Disposable Plastics?



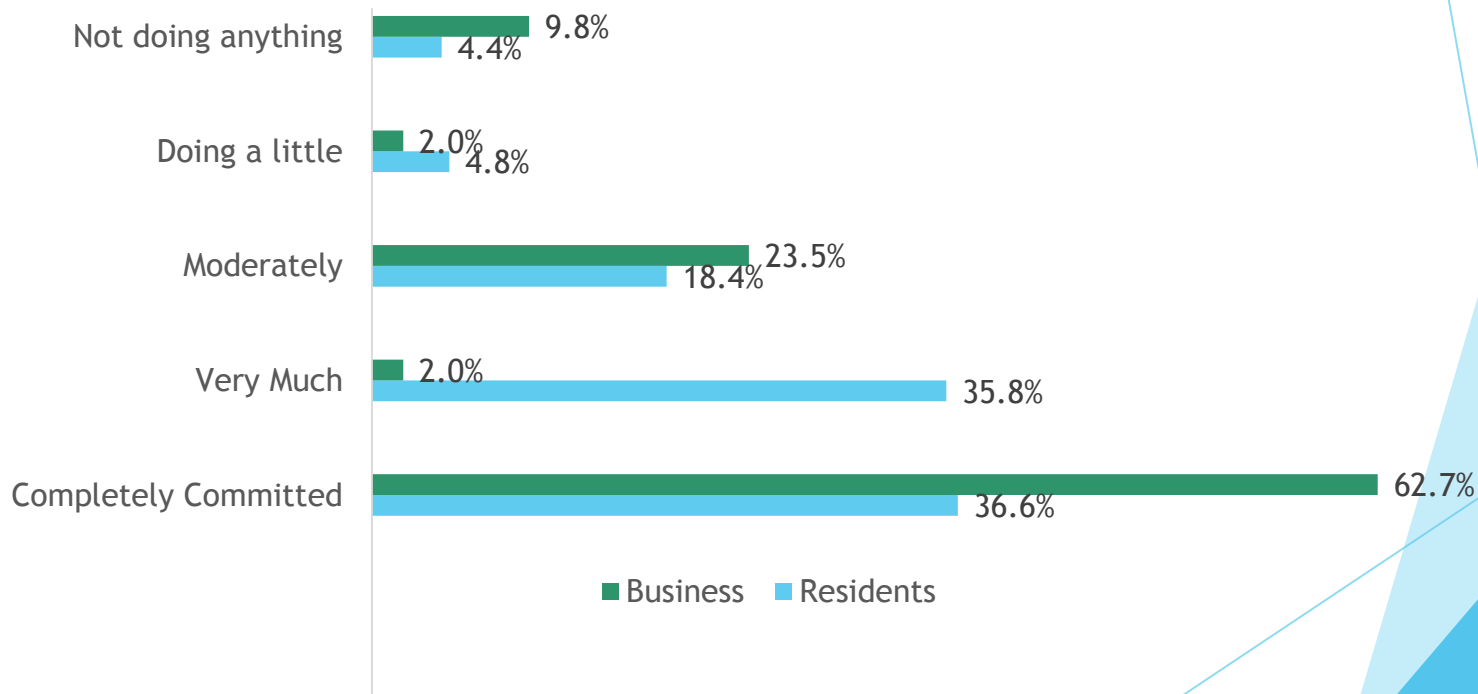
# Conservation Commission Study: Survey Results Details

## Q4 - Businesses will receive goodwill by reducing single-use plastics



# Conservation Commission Study: Survey Results Details

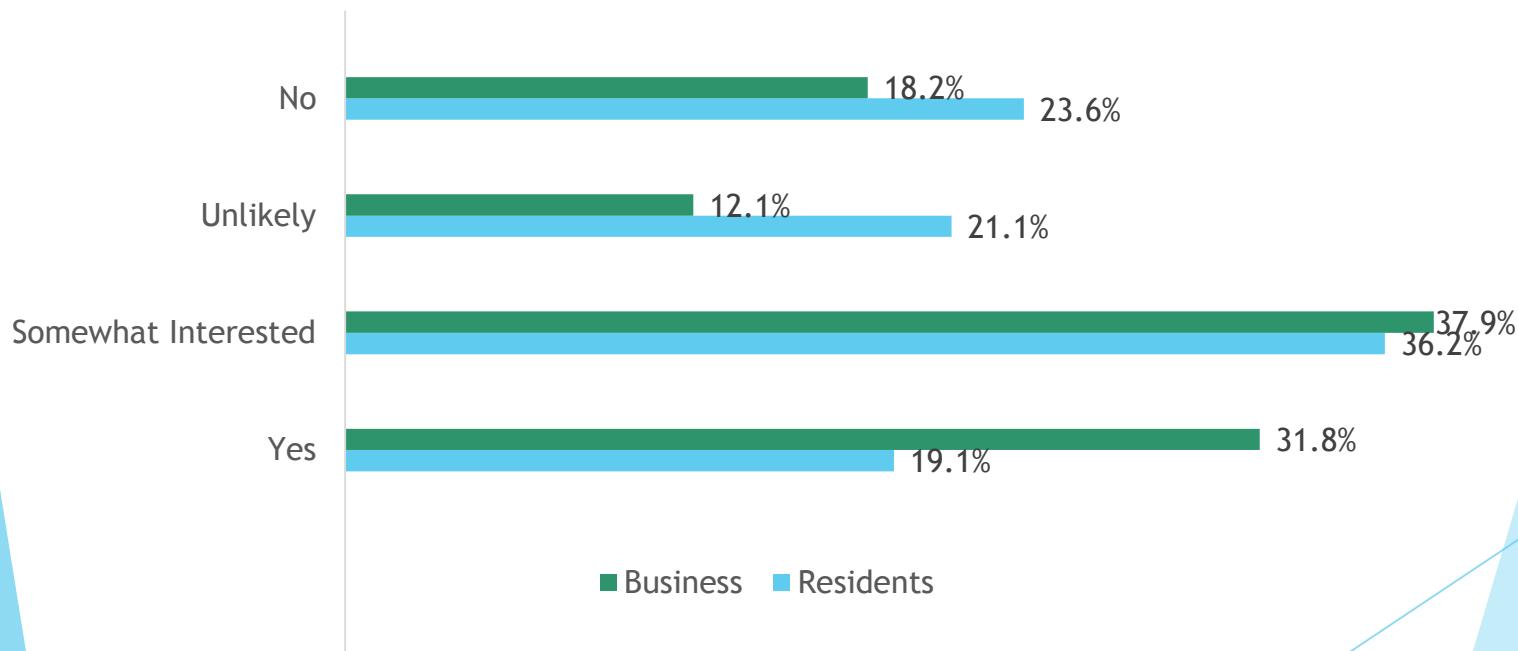
Q5 - How committed are you to reducing single-use plastics?





# Conservation Commission Study: Survey Results Details

Q6 - Would you participate with the Town in developing a plan to reduce single-use plastics



# Conservation Commission

## Study: Supporting Documentation

### ► Facts about Single-Use Plastics

- U.S. uses 100 Billion plastic bags per year (1,500 bags/person/year)
- U.S. recycles 1% of those bags
- Plastic bag usage is 12 min vs 500+ years to degrade to microplastic stage
- 94% US water supply contains microplastics....health impact not yet known
- Plastic bags and films NOT accepted into current single stream recycling
- Unique waste-to-energy plant required to recycle
- Business Cost of Plastic Bag = 1cent
- Typical municipal Cost of Plastic Bag = 17cents \*

\*The City of San Francisco estimated the cost of clean up and landfill at 17 cents per bag.

Here is how they calculated the cost per bag for the 50 million bags used in that city per year:

Contamination of recycling stream: \$1.09 million/year = 2.2 cents per bag.

Collecting and disposing of bags: \$3.6 million/year = 7.2 cents per bag.

Removing bags from streets: \$2.6 million/year = 5.2 cents per bag.

Processing in landfills: \$1.2 million/year = 2.4 cents per bag.

**Total cost per bag in SF : \$8.49 million/year = 17 cents per bag**

# Conservation Commission

## Study: Supporting Documentation

### ► General Facts found by Newport, RI Study:

#### ► What is the problem with plastic bags?

Single-use plastic bags impact our community by creating litter on our roadways, polluting the harbor and endangering wildlife. Used for an average of only 12 minutes, plastics remain in the environment forever. Since 2013, Clean Ocean Access has removed 11,766 single-use plastic bags from our shoreline. In Rhode Island, the potential for plastics to contaminate and degrade the fishing industry could affect a \$40 million industry.

#### ► What is the link between human health and plastic litter?

Plastic particles carry toxins such as PCBs, DDT, and dioxins – all cancer causing chemicals. Plastics do not biodegrade. Instead, sunlight breaks plastic into tiny fragments that enter our soil, harbor, and drinking water.

#### ► What is the link between animal health and plastic litter?

Plastics kill wildlife through ingestion or entanglement.

#### ► Why does Newport need an ordinance instead of simply encouraging people to change their behavior?

We need to do both! The “Newport Re-uses” campaign combines an ordinance with an educational program. This beautiful city is dependent on a clean harbor and beaches; therefore, it makes sense that Newport provide leadership in environmental health and sustainability. Enforcement begins November 1, 2017.

#### ► Will this ordinance really work?

Yes! Communities that have enacted similar ordinances - along with educational outreach - have seen an increase in the numbers of shoppers who bring reusable bags, resulting in a decrease in the litter on roads and waterways.

Barrington, Rhode Island passed a similar ordinance in September 2012. Residents and businesses quickly adjusted to the change

# Conservation Commission

## Study: Supporting Documentation

### ► General Facts found by Newport, RI Study (cont.):

#### ► Reusable bags eventually become worn out and end up in the landfill so what is the point?

Reusable bags eventually become trash; however, one reusable bag can hold 2-3 times more than a single-use plastic bag, and one reusable bag can be used hundreds of times. For every reusable bag, we eliminate at least 500 single-use bags from our environment.

#### ► Are single-use plastic bags recyclable?

Single-use plastic bags are not recyclable at the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Center (RIRRC). They jam machines halting recycling production and creating physical hazards for RIRRC workers. Rhode Island requires retailers to provide receptacles for plastic bag collection. Nationally, 3% of single-use plastic bags are returned to grocery stores. The data is unclear as to how much of that material is actually recycled.

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/title23/23-18.11/INDEX.HTM>

#### ► What about plastic bags that are labeled “biodegradable” or “compostable”?

No legal standards exist for the terms “biodegradable” or “compostable.” Many products are advertised as “compostable” but can only be broken down by industrial machinery.

#### ► Do reusable bags become contaminated with bacteria after carrying meats and other food?

It is important to clean reusable bags to protect your health. Surfaces that come in contact with raw meats may be contaminated with bacteria. Reusable fabric bags can be laundered along with the rest of your clothes. “Barrier bags” that protect meat and produce from other grocery items are allowed under the ordinance.