

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Resolution Supporting Legislation Discouraging the Use of Plastic Bags

July 8, 2009

WHEREAS, plastic bags are widely used by stores for packaging purchased goods; and

WHEREAS, many of these bags are released to the environment where they are a threat to wildlife and aquatic organisms; and

WHEREAS, plastic bags ultimately are broken up into small fragments that are often confused with food by fish; and

WHEREAS, paper bags (particularly where composed of materials with high recycled content) provide an alternative to plastic bags, are biodegradable and do not pose the similar risks to the environment; and

WHEREAS, the use of paper bags, while preferable to plastic, still poses risks of releasing greenhouse gases if incinerated or even greater risks if buried in a landfill; and

WHEREAS, the use of more permanent bags that can be reused should be encouraged because they reduce the problems associated with plastic and paper bags; and

WHEREAS, multiple bills were introduced in the Virginia legislature in 2009 that proposed banning plastic bags, imposing fees for bags needing disposal and encouraging the use of bags that can be reused, and similar bills are expected for the next legislative session.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Environmental Quality Advisory Council recommends that the Board of Supervisors support legislation that discourages the use of plastic bags and encourages the use of reusable bags; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that EQAC recommends that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors support legislation that would establish fees for disposable bags in order to encourage the use of bags that will be reused.