

**CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

JULY 1, 2008

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17 Walter Carlos: And they still taste great. And you can use my SUV at the
18 end of the drains because it catches every plastic bag. Um, I do have a concern. Uh, this
19 box represents what we get in – it's 3,000 plastic bags. Uh, when we go to paper, which
20 we voted on last month – Subway in L.A. County will have reusable bags probably in the
21 next 30 days – uh, my concern is during the summer specifically is – our trash areas get
22 overfilled, uh, to the point I got fined twice last summer because of the tourists coming
23 in. So, when we gather everything around, uh, the Waste Management processes, uh,
24 can't keep up. So I'm hoping we're going to address that when we go ahead. Because
25 when I start storing 3,000 paper bags, that's going to be much bigger than this. Okay?
26 So, we're in favor of it. We uh, we're in design now with paper bags. Uh, we passed the
27 reusable bag, which again, we'll have in the next 30 days. But this is my biggest concern
28 – is that this holds 3,000 bags. If I try and put 3,000 paper bags in my restaurant, it's –
you know, there won't be any room for sandwiches. (Laughter) So just – if we can get
that going, that would be great. Or just keep that on the radar. Because it's – that is
going to overflow. You know, because I go after the Waste Management people when
they come around and they go to the corners and they don't pick everything up – and I
help them remember they need to pick everything up. So that's – I really would like that
to be addressed and watched.

21 Mayor Montgomery: Thank you, sir. Appreciate it.

22 (Applause.)

23 Mayor Montgomery: So I'll see you this weekend. How are you doing?

25 Dr. Mark Gold: Good evening. My name is Dr. Mark Gold. I'm uh, president
26 of Heal the Bay, as well as an environmental scientist – as opposed to a lawyer. Um, and
27 I want to make – also, just to show you a different turtle who ended up on Google – not a
28 blue bag, just to let you know. Um, Heal the Bay strongly supports the ordinance and

1 Manhattan Beach's leadership on Bay protection. This continues a long history of this
2 city really being the leader on environmental protection in the South Bay. Uh, an
3 excellent staff report and initial study. Uh, the problem characterization you've already
4 heard. Um, your staff did a wonderful job in going into it, so there's no need to do that.

5 Um, we're also out there all the time. We do more than 300 adopt-a-beaches
6 cleanups every, every single year. We lead Coastal Cleanup Day every year in Los
7 Angeles County for the last eighteen years. And um, clearly, uh, the first speaker has
8 never done a beach cleanup and has never been to Compton Creek and has never been to
9 the Los Angeles River. Anyone who can say they've ever been there and said there were
10 no plastic bags, um, is absolutely lying through their teeth. And the reality is, we, we do
11 the data, um, and every year plastic bags ends up in the top ten most frequently found
12 items on the beach. So this is a marine debris problem. This is a Santa Monica Bay
13 protection problem. This is not about climate change in the decision that you are making
14 today. This is about protecting Santa Monica Bay, which is the most important issue for
15 your community.

16 Um, I'd be more than happy to answer any question you may have in regards to
17 2449, the San Francisco ordinance, or any of those sorts of things. You asked a lot of
18 questions earlier. I will say that that lack of a fee provision in 2449 was a poison pill that
19 was lobbied for by the plastic bag industry at the last second, um, and that was something
20 that was very, very disturbing and led to us being a sponsor – going from sponsor to
21 opponent, um, overnight, which was very unfortunate. Also, any question you have on
22 2058 – we are a sponsor of 2058, so I'd be more than happy to answer any of those
23 questions as well.

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25 Mayor Montgomery: Mark, I've got one for you. Just – on your letter – and I
26 appreciate your letter dated June 2, 2008, that Sarah Abramson and Sonny Diaz wrote –

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28 Dr. Mark Gold: Uh-huh.

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2 Mayor Montgomery: The back of that letter – what is your position on
3 biodegradable plastic bags? Are you asking for the inclusion of the ban in our proposed
4 ordinance? And the reason why that is.

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6 Dr. Mark Gold: Well, right now, um, in the version that you have, it includes
7 all plastic bags, including bioplastics. And this is a key part of what happened in
8 Oakland and San Francisco. Um, which is – those bans did not include bioplastics, which
9 is a huge mistake. And so by not doing the CEQA analysis specifically on what the
10 environmental impacts were of not banning that, and moving towards bioplastics with the
11 many problems that they cause, that was a major shortcoming. Oakland – why were they
12 sued rather than San Francisco? They were sued because Oakland, frankly, wasn't going
13 to defend themselves in court the same way that San Francisco did. Go talk to anyone in
14 San Francisco. That's exactly what happened.

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16 So, that being said, bioplastics – they do biodegrade very, very well – in a compost
17 pile. Not in the ocean at very, very low temperatures in comparison to a compost pile.
18 And certainly not in an ocean that has very low bacteria densities that are necessary to do
19 biodegradation rapidly that you see in a compost pile. So that's why it's important that
20 this is a plastic bag ban that includes all plastics, which we commend you for moving in
21 that direction.

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22 Mayor Montgomery: Thank you, Mark.

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24 Dr. Mark Gold: You're welcome.

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26 CM Aldinger: I have a – the L.A. County, uh, study –

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28 Dr. Mark Gold: Yeah.

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1 CM Aldinger: And their proposed ordinance, which I think – what's the
2 advantage to doing it – going that route versus just banning bags right now?

3 Dr. Mark Gold: Well, the L.A. County direction – um, really, they did their
4 study and found out there were six billion bags that were being used annually, uh, within
5 L. A. Country, which I have to admit – you know, you would figure, me being at Heal the
6 Bay for the last twenty years, I wouldn't be surprised by much. That was an order of
7 magnitude higher than I thought, to be quite candid. So that makes -- it makes you realize
8 you cannot recycle your way to a solution to the plastic bag problem. The best recycling
9 program there is out there is two-thirds. You'd still have two billion bags left. And right
10 now they're at one percent, so come on. We're not even close.

11 So that being said, L.A. County is not even happy with how they went. Why do
12 you think they are basically the lead sponsor on um, 2058 right now? So, so they're not
13 happy with the direction. They wanted to go the fee route and they were precluded from
14 going the fee route with 2449, but the report was so compelling that they felt they needed
15 to do something and keep it as a placeholder now. And that's why they ended up with
16 this tiered approach.

17 They know that the recycling program that they're setting up is doomed to failure
18 and that basically it's putting a ban out there in the future. But that's how they ended up
19 doing it, and now, they're the ones working as hard as Heal the Bay on trying to get 2058
20 passed.

21 CM Aldinger: So there's no way we'll get to the recycling content that
22 they're expected to and it'll just be a ban in two years or whatever.

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27 Mayor Montgomery: 2013.

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1 Dr. Mark Gold: Nobody in the County of Los Angeles I have heard thinks that
2 they'll reach the sixty-five percent target. They think it's a phase ban.

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4 Mayor Montgomery: We know how well voluntary works. Mayor Pro Tem?

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6 CM Cohen: Uh, I want to um, quote your organization's letter again. But
7 – about a fee. I mean, the letter says it's critical. Can you comment on the paper fee
8 component in terms of helping the success of this type of ban?

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10 Dr. Mark Gold: Well, we think it's critical because the age-old question of
11 paper versus plastic is the wrong question. It's, it's, the answer to that question is, of
12 course, reusable. And if you're looking at the wrong choice – paper versus plastic is an
13 issue. Now, we've sat down – and I'm not going to name which groceries stores that we
14 have sat down with. Obviously, we've worked with Whole Foods and, you know,
15 commend them for making their decision independently, on their own, that it was the
16 right thing to do for business. But we have met with other members of the California
17 Grocers Association that run hundreds of stores. Their big concern – and I, I don't – I'm
18 not saying I represent them in any way, shape, or form. I'm telling you about a
19 conversation that we've had – is that the price of plastic versus the price of paper is
20 substantial. And so – and the difference is anywhere between an order of magnitude of
21 0.5 cents versus 5 cents to – we've also seen paper bags somewhere around 2 to 3 cents.
22 But either way, it's a lot more money. And so that's a big concern. So their big concern
23 is, if everyone goes from plastic to paper overnight, that's a substantial increase in the
24 costs, where, you know, obviously markets, with the recession that we're in – um,
25 supermarkets – that's the margin that they're most concerned about.

26 That being said, they understand that reusable is where we need to end up, and
27 reusable does save the supermarkets and other retail stores money in the long run because
28 they don't have to buy bags. And at the same time, they can brand the bags that you buy

1 at the store and continue getting their products there. So – it's, how do you get to that
2 transition as quickly as possible, in a way that helps out everyone in business and
3 minimizes that impact.
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5 Mayor Montgomery: Thank you, Mark, for your letter and your comments, sir.
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7 CM Aldinger: Do you think there's like a maximum amount that we can get
8 to as far as reusable? I mean, will it top out at seventy-five percent or eighty percent? Or
9 is there some number that we should be targeting?
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11 Dr. Mark Gold: I think – you know, it's too early to tell. For me to compare
12 what's going on, you know, in Europe or what's going on in China compared to here, I
13 don't think is appropriate. And so, really, what you and Malibu are doing, um, right now
14 is moving ahead of other places in the rest of the country.
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16 Mayor Montgomery: Thank you, sir.
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18 Dr. Mark Gold: All right.
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20 Mayor Montgomery: Appreciate it.
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22 (Applause.)
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24 Mayor Montgomery: Jose.
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26 Jose Bacahal: Good evening. My name is Jose Bacahal. I am a resident of
27 Hermosa Beach. I have a beautiful wife and two kids. We enjoy living in the South Bay.
28 I was born and raised in the South Bay, and I hope that the City Council moves forward
on the ban of plastic bags. It's hard to follow up Dr. Gold, but uh, I did do a quick look