RESOLUTION NO. 3852

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO
ENCOURAGING THE USE OF RECYCLABLE PAPER AND/OR REUSABLE
CHECKOUT BAGS BY SHOPS, STORES, EATING PLACES AND RETAIL FOOD
VENDORS LOCATED IN THE TOWN.

WHEREAS, globally the production and use of plastic bags has significant environmental impacts each year, including the use of over 12 million barrels of oil, and the deaths of thousands of marine animals through ingestion and entanglement; and

WHEREAS, each year, an estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide, which is over one million bags per minute, many of which end up as litter each year; and

WHEREAS, most plastic carry-out bags do not biodegrade, but instead photo-degrade, which means that the bags break down into smaller and smaller toxic bits that enter the food web when animals mistake those materials for food; and

WHEREAS, because plastic does not biodegrade, every piece of plastic that has found its way from California shores to the Pacific Ocean for the past fifty years still remains in the ocean or has been accumulating in the central Pacific. The remaining plastic is deposited on local or distant shores; and,

WHEREAS, plastic fragments act as “sponges” for dangerous compounds and other toxic materials in ocean water. Plastics have been found to concentrate these toxic chemicals at levels of up to one million times the levels found in sea water; and,

WHEREAS, plastic bags are easily carried by wind from uncovered trash and dumpsters, vehicles and solid waste facilities including landfills; and,

WHEREAS, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that over 52,000 tons of disposable bags were used in California in 2000 and less than 50 tons were recovered for recycling; and,

WHEREAS, the economics of recycling plastic bags are difficult to sustain, due to the logistics of sorting, contamination of inks, and the overall low quality of the plastic used in plastic bags, resulting in an estimated rate of 1-3% of all plastic bags being recycled in any way; and,

WHEREAS, while there are many serious negative environmental impacts from the use of paper grocery bags as well, nonetheless, 45% of all paper products are recycled while less than 5% of plastics are recycled, and

WHEREAS, almost all curbside pickup and recycling centers allow customers to mix paper bags with newspapers for recycling but very few accept plastic bags for recycling; and,

WHEREAS, alternatives to plastic bags are readily available and include re-usable cloth bags, paper bags, and grocery stores can provide reusable bags for sale and encourage their customers to use such bags, making plastic unnecessary; and,
WHEREAS, the Town of San Anselmo has a duty to protect the natural environment, the economy, and the health of its citizens.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Town Council wishes to encourage the reduction of the use of plastic bags in San Anselmo, as follows:

USE OF RECYCLABLE CHECKOUT BAGS

(a) All stores, shops, eating places and retail food vendors are encouraged to provide only the following as checkout bags to customers: recyclable paper bags and reusable bags.

(b) Compliance with this plastic bag reduction resolution is encouraged on a voluntary basis and contains no administrative or legal sanctions.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be read to preclude stores, shops, eating places and retail food vendors from making reusable bags available for sale to customers.

APPROVED this 23rd day of September, 2008, by the following vote:

AYES: BREEN, GREENE, FREEMAN, HOUSE, THORNTON

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Ted Freeman, Mayor

ATTEST:

Barbara Chambers, Town Clerk