

**Alliance for a Living Ocean • Beyond Plastics • Clean Ocean Action • Clean Water
Action • Environment NJ • Save Barnegat Bay • Sierra Club-NJ Chapter •
Surfrider Foundation**

December 9, 2020

Ms Linda Martin
Municipal Clerk
Stafford Township
260 E Bay Ave
Manahawkin, NJ 08050

Dear Ms Martin:

The undersigned environmental organizations have a long and successful history battling plastic pollution that impacts our coasts and environment in New Jersey at the local and state level.

We collectively strongly oppose Ordinance No. 2020-42 REPEALING CHAPTER 136, SECTION 7.1 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF STAFFORD ENTITLED "SINGLE-USE-PLASTIC BAGS".

Furthermore, we oppose how the public hearings are being conducted for this Ordinance, and hereby notifies the Township that the manner in which said hearings are being conducted violates the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act. Indeed, the Township is effectively preventing the public from being heard on this ill-advised Ordinance.

We are in a worsening pandemic that is pushing the capacity of our health care system to its limit. The Governor has mandated that indoor gatherings cannot exceed ten people. While we recognize that this meeting is being conducted within the parameters of the state's rules regarding covered political speech, the Township is obviously aware that most members of the public will not make this nuanced distinction.

Anyone watching the broadcast town meetings can see there are already nearly ten people in the room, and thus, a resident may reasonably assume that their presence would bring the number of people in the room to over ten.

Most towns in the state are conducting their business remotely via video conferencing. It is unconscionable that Stafford Township is conducting their business in person thereby forcing people to endanger themselves to participate in their democracy. Moreover, the chilling effect of the Township conducting its meetings in this manner is directly contrary to the letter and spirit of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.

Our Governor is prohibiting people from gathering throughout the State, yet that is exactly what the Township is requiring people to do in order to comment on this Ordinance. There is no justification for conducting town business in this way when there is a safe and readily available alternative.

Furthermore, a statewide ban on plastic bags will be going into effect in May, 2022 since Governor Phil Murphy signed A-1978 / S-864 on November 4, 2020. By repealing your current

ban now, which will only be replaced by a statewide ban in 17 months, you are asking both consumers and business owners to change, and then change back again after making the original change in 2018. Quite simply this is not good governance.

Accordingly, the undersigned organizations respectfully request that Ordinance No. 2020-42 be tabled until such a time that the Township enables remote video conference meetings or when it is safe to gather in numbers that reflect the capacity of the meeting chamber.

Please share this correspondence with the Mayor and Township Council. Feel free to reach out and discuss this further with John Weber at 732-567-1787 or at Jweber@surfrider.org.

Sincerely,

John Weber
Surfrider Foundation, Mid Atlantic Regional Manager

Kyle Gronostajski
Alliance for a Living Ocean, Executive Director

Judith Enck
Beyond Plastics, President and Former EPA Region 2 Regional Administrator

Cindy Zipf
Clean Ocean Action, Executive Director

Amy Goldsmith
Clean Water Action, NJ State Director

Doug O'Malley
Environment New Jersey, State Director

Jeff Tittel
NJ Sierra Club, Director

Britta Forsberg-Wenzel
Save Barnegat Bay, Executive Director