



Catoctin News

Newsletter of the Catoctin Group serving
Carroll and Frederick Counties

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Reusable Bag Ordinance in the City of Frederick to be Introduced

By Kerry Hesley

Those who support this legislation are encouraged to attend the legislative workshop on February 8, 2023 at 3 pm at City Hall, carrying their reusable shopping bag.

February 8, 2023, the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of Frederick will consider legislation sponsored by Alderwoman Donna Kuzemchak to ban the distribution of single use plastic bags at checkout for retail stores and restaurants and to require a 10 cent fee for any other (usually paper) take out bags.

Worldwide, shoppers use approximately 1 trillion plastic shopping bags annually. Frederick City residents use an estimated 29 million plastic carryout bags annually. These bags have about a 15-minute "working life," but persist in the environment beyond our lifetimes.

Plastic bags contribute to unsightly litter, and end up in our soil and waterways, the Chesapeake Bay, and the ocean, where they degrade into microplastics, absorbing toxic chemicals. Plastic shopping bags and microplastics are ingested by marine life, injuring and killing fish, seabirds, and marine mammals. On land, plastic bag litter is a lethal threat to livestock and wildlife. In a recent trash collection and survey by Sierra Club in the city of Frederick, plastic bags were the number one littered item.

Many wonder why we don't just recycle plastic bags. The truth is that after years of use, only about 5% of plastic bags are recycled. They are not accepted in curbside recycling programs because they foul the machinery and are too contaminated to be marketed. Even if the recycling rate could be improved, it would not prevent littered plastic bags from entering the environment. Paper bags also have their environmental costs however. Charging for them and other single-use bags is a financial incentive to switch to reusable bags and reduce

waste. Shoppers may avoid paying by bringing their own bag.

Customers are already paying for "complimentary" carryout bags. Their cost is part of stores' overhead, a hidden cost embedded in the price of merchandise. The annual cost to retailers in the US to give away "free" bags is approximately 4 billion dollars.

Eleven states, including nearby Delaware, and more than 500 localities in the U.S. have enacted carryout bag laws. Locally, several municipalities have banned plastic carryout bags (Chestertown, Laurel, Takoma Park, Westminster). Montgomery and Howard counties have taxed carryout bags.

More recently, Baltimore City, Easton and Salisbury have passed legislation banning the use of single use plastic bags and charging for paper bags. The fee goes to the establishment; it is not a tax.

Kuzemchak worked closely with Sierra Club Catoctin Group to draft legislation. Policy which bans plastic bags and charges for paper bags is known as "hybrid" and is the most effective in shifting consumers' habits to carrying and using reusable bags. Some Maryland grocery chains already do not offer plastic carryout bags and charge a minimum of 10 cents for paper bags; more than 90% of their customers bring a reusable bag or use no bag.

Those who support this legislation are encouraged to attend the legislative workshop on February 8, 2023 at 3 pm at City Hall, carrying their reusable shopping bag. A strong show of support will be needed.



Climate and Inflation

By Ron Kaltenbaugh

Inflation has been impacting people and in the news a lot over the past year or so. Many reasons for high inflation are talked about including fallout from the pandemic, supply chain issues, the war in Ukraine, and various ideas on too much government spending. However, one driver of inflation that has not received enough attention is climate change.

How is climate change impacting inflation? The simple answer is disrupting markets. Below are a few examples:

- **Mississippi River Water Levels** — Climate change is one of the factors impacting drought conditions that is leading to lower water levels on the Mississippi River. Lower water levels result in lighter loads per barge and fewer barges per tow. This increases costs for farmers and can create shipping backlogs. According to an article on agweb.com, as of October 4th, barge shipping costs were at \$90.45/ton, up over 200% from last year and almost 400% over the 3-year average.

- **Insurance** — As more climate-related disasters occur, they result in more insurance payouts. This is causing dramatic increases in insurance rates and in some cases resulting in insurance companies leaving some markets entirely. Florida, with much of its development on the coasts and former swamp land, is particularly impacted by this. In addition to higher insurance premiums, this impacts real estate markets and property values.

- **Too Much and Too Little Water for Farmers** — When the rain occurs can be as important as how much. Greater than normal springtime flooding can impact planting season, and hotter and drier than

normal summertime months can hurt yields. Either of these and sometimes both in the same year can cause production to fall and food costs to rise.

- **Grapes for Wine** — There are many factors that go into creating a great bottle of wine. The combination of soil, temperature, and water are critical. Grapes that mature too

quickly will be more acidic and not have enough time for the needed sugars to be produced. Some wine growing regions are already being impacted, and this will have cost impacts for wine buyers. Note that beer drinkers will also be impacted as barley, hops, and other beer ingredients will be similarly impacted.



The above are just a few examples of how climate change is disrupting markets and driving inflation. The bottom line is that climate-induced volatility, impacts, and disruptions will only increase in the years ahead. This will increasingly be a major economic impact that will drive inflation and hurt our economy. This is just another reason for acting on climate change with urgency.

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IRA Times 2

The familiar acronym, IRA, has taken on a second meaning. Now IRA is not only an Individual Retirement Account to help provide for life after retirement, but it is also the Inflation Reduction Act. With this second meaning, it can help save you money, make your home healthier, and fight climate change.

For your personal money, the IRA includes the Energy Efficient Home Improvement Credit which can help homeowners replace exterior doors, windows and skylights. It can also help switch homes to more efficient heating and air conditioning, and upgrade electric panels.

On the subject of health, besides making homes healthier, it extends funding for the Affordable Care Act through 2025.

Fighting climate change is a major part of the IRA. It provides help for small businesses, schools, and hospitals to also become more energy efficient.

For more information follow the link below. The IRA is complicated, but it is also worthy of your time and attention. The planet needs everyone to get out of reliance on fossil fuels and embrace electrification of their homes and transportation.

\$AVE MONEY \$AVE YOUR HEALTH \$AVE OUR CLIMATE

(from Kathleen Rall)

Tax rebates beginning in 2023

30% for solar, geothermal or battery storage installation

\$4000-7500 for EV purchase

\$2000-8000 for heat pump HVAC

\$2000 for heat pump water heater

\$840 for electric range or dryer

\$600 for new electric panel

\$1200 for basic weatherization

AND MORE!

Info at <https://www.rewiringamerica.org>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sierra Club Catoctin Group Monthly Meetings

First Saturday of the Month

Common Market

927 West 7 th Street, Frederick, 11:00 am

January 7 Meeting

Karen Russell will talk about animal corridors.

Location: Common Market

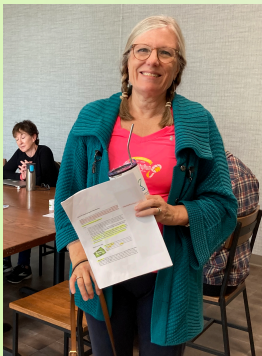
College Park Plaza Shopping Center

Meetings are held in the Community Room

Recent Meetings

November's meeting featured Linda Norris Waldt talking about composting at the state and national level.

December's meeting featured Ron Kaltenbaugh reviewing electric vehicles.



Linda Norris Waldt

Local Election a Victory for Sierra Club-Endorsed Candidates

by Vanessa Gress

Five of Seven SC-Catoctin Group Endorsees Elected

Another election has come and gone this year, and the local results were very favorable for those of us that are passionate about environmental issues. In Frederick County, five of the seven Sierra Club – Catoctin Group endorsed candidates were elected to the County Council. The new County Council will be a Democratic majority, with five Democrats and two Republicans. The Democrats elected that were endorsed by the Catoctin Group include Renee Knapp and Brad W. Young as the two at-large members, Jerry Donald in District 1, M.C. Keegan-Ayer in District 3, and Kavonte Duckett in District 4. The two Republicans elected include Steven McKay in District 2 and Mason Carter in District 5.



Farmland Preservation is Fitzwater Priority

The new County Executive is Democrat Jessica Fitzwater, who was also endorsed by the Sierra Club – Catoctin Group over her opponent Michael Hough. Jessica Fitzwater was a co-sponsor on the 2020 Climate Emergency Resolutions, which led to the Climate Emergency Mobilization Workgroup that created the Climate Emergency Report. She campaigned on continuing the work of outgoing County Executive Jan Gardner, and emphasized environmental issues throughout her campaign. According to the Frederick News-Post, Fitzwater stated during her swearing in ceremony that one of her priorities will be farmland preservation and consideration of climate change when making policy and budget decisions.

The results of the election came almost two weeks after election day, but it felt like years for those of us waiting to see which party would prevail. Immediately after election day, it appeared that the Republicans had swept the County Council and County Executive races. However, the mail-in ballots still had to be counted and it became apparent that huge numbers of Democrats had mailed in their ballots. When all was said and done, the Democrats were the ones who had swept the contests and now have a solid majority on the council. While some thought the victories were worth the wait, others wondered why the counting took so long. Hopefully the counting system will get better if the trend of mailing in ballots and early voting continues.

Work of New City Council begins

On December 6, 2022, new County Executive Jessica Fitzwater named Barb Trader, a former Catoctin Group Executive Committee member and co-chair of the Climate Emergency Mobilization Workgroup, as a co-chair of her Sustainability, Infrastructure, and Transportation transition team workgroup. On the same day at the first County Council meeting with its new members, Brad Young was elected as president of the council and Kavonte Duckett was elected as vice president. After all the hard work from the Catoctin Group's members to get their endorsed candidates elected, the work of the new County Council begins. Along with it begins a new effort to fight for the environmental issues our group is most concerned about and ensure that we continue our progress on climate and smart growth.

Officers/Committee Chairs

Chairperson Open

Vice Chair Open

Secretary Open

Treasurer Patty O'Malley

Membership Open

Executive Committee Patti Fredericks, Vanessa Gress, Ron Kaltenbaugh, Bob Ladner, Patty O'Malley, James Wagner, Paul Walker

Newsletter Manager/Editor: Jane Ladner, Design Editor: Dee Dolan

Further Information

<http://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/catoctin-group>

