



LESSON 2.5

PUBLIC HEARING: PLASTIC POLLUTION POLICY

GRADE LEVEL	TIME
	
6-8, 9-12	MULTIPLE CLASS PERIODS

Objective:

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to research and present different perspectives from community members considering a policy on plastic bags. They will utilize a ‘town hall’ style role play to voice the opinions of their character and then together work to decide if their community will or will not implement a policy on plastic bags. This activity is an exercise in research, public speaking, civic duty, and learning about the roles in community participation.

Instructions:

1. Distribute role description cards, instructions, and rubric.
2. Have students develop their character’s perspective by asking questions and conducting research using the articles and resources from previous activities or from the [PBS.org Research Guide](#) as needed.
3. Have students turn in their prepared materials at least one day prior to the activity to offer feedback and ensure they have properly prepared for the activity.
4. Hold a public hearing. The length of public speaking will vary depending on the age of students.
5. The facilitator will open the meeting and introduce the characters.
6. The Councilmembers present their statements one at a time.
7. The facilitator will invite the community members one at a time to present their opinions
8. The facilitator will address the audience and allow them to ask questions of the Councilmembers one at a time.
9. If voting, the facilitator asks each voter to present their decision.
10. The facilitator closes the meeting and states if the bag ban has been passed.
11. Have students complete the Student Response Sheets.



Materials:

- Role Description Cards
- Student Response Sheet
- Student Rubric



Notes:



Learning Standards:

ELA:
W1, W6, WHST1, SL4

SCI:
MS-ESS3-3, HS-LS2-7

SS:
8.8.c, 10.9.a, 10.9.b,
SS-KI #4

GLLP: 6, 8

Note: There are many recordings of local town hall and public hearing meetings available. Many of these recordings contain the entire length of the meeting (ie: 1-2 hours) but you can show students several minutes of a meeting to give them an example of a public hearing.



Student Roles:

1. Two Councilmembers: students will research and prepare a statement of their position and present it.
 - a. Councilmember who supports the plastic bag policy.
 - b. Councilmember who opposes the plastic bag policy.
* These councilmembers would also vote if class is voting
2. Three Voting Councilmembers (optional if conducting a vote).
 - a. These councilmembers will listen to all statements from the other councilmembers and opinions of community members. After observing, they will be given a set time to deliberate and make a decision. They will then present their decision to the class.
3. Notetaker/Facilitator (this can be the same person or divided between two students)
 - a. Note taking is important to create a public record of what was stated
 - b. Facilitating ensures that the public hearing runs smoothly by keeping time for questions and public statements, calling speakers, keeping order, etc.
4. Town Recycling Coordinator
5. Community Members: Students will prepare a statement about their perspective and opinion on the plastic bag policy.
 - a. Grocery Store Owner
 - b. Retail Store Owner
 - c. Restaurant Owner
 - d. Non-governmental organization
 - e. Researcher
 - f. Environmental Activist
 - g. Plastic Bag Manufacturer
 - h. Shopper in support of the bag policy
 - i. Shopper who opposes bag policy
 - j. Audience Members
 - k. Journalists

NOTE:

Suggested roles listed above. The community members listed have role description cards. If there are more students than roles, feel free to expand beyond or have students develop their own ideas on the blank role cards. Students could also work in pairs or double up to have multiple people with the same role.

Plastic Pollution and You

PLASTIC POLLUTION POLICY ROLE CARDS 1

Town Council

Councilmember 1

You are a member of the Town Council who introduced the plastic bag policy and is speaking in support of it at the meeting. You feel that there are several reasons that this is good for your community. These reasons include reducing plastic pollution in the community's neighborhoods, streets, and parks as well as raising money from a fee on plastic bags for the town's environmental and recreation programs. Together with the other councilmembers, you will present the decision to the class.

Town Council

Councilmember 2

You are a member of the Town Council who is opposed to the plastic bag policy and is speaking against it at the meeting. You feel that there are several reasons that this would not be good for your community. These reasons include the increase in costs for people at stores if there is a fee on plastic bags and the increase cost for stores if they must buy reusable bags. Additionally, you feel that there are other problems that the Town Council should be concerned about that are more important. Together with the other councilmembers, you will present the decision to the class.

Town Council

Councilmember 3

You are a member of the Town Council who has not made up their mind about the plastic bag policy yet. You will listen to all statements from the other councilmembers and opinions of community members. After listening, you will think about the statements, and do your own research and then decide. Together with the other councilmembers, you will present the decision to the class.

Town Council

Councilmember 4

You are a member of the Town Council who has not made up their mind about the plastic bag policy yet. You will listen to all statements from the other councilmembers and opinions of community members. After listening, you will think about the statements, and do your own research and then decide. Together with the other councilmembers, you will present the decision to the class.



Plastic Pollution and You

PLASTIC POLLUTION POLICY ROLE CARDS 2

Town Council

Councilmember 5

You are a member of the Town Council who has not made up their mind about the plastic bag policy yet. You will listen to all statements from the other councilmembers and opinions of community members. After listening, you will think about the statements, and do your own research and then decide. Together with the other councilmembers, you will present the decision to the class.

Town Employee

Town Recycling Coordinator

You are the recycling coordinator for your town. You oversee collecting recyclable items from businesses and residents each week in their curbside recycling bins. You have noticed that plastic bags are often put in the recycling bins, even though they frequently get tangled in the gears and moving parts of your recycling trucks and the machines at the materials recovery facility. Undoing these jams takes a lot of time and is costing the town money.

Town Employee

Timekeeper

You will be keeping time for any public statements and questions from the speakers and the community members. Time limits will be determined before the meeting begins. Sticking to these time limits ensures that the public hearing runs smoothly.

Town Employee

Notetaker

You will be taking notes for a public record of what was stated. These notes should include the name of anyone who speaks at the meeting and what their main points were. Councilmembers will use these notes while they make their decision. Community members may also request to see notes after the meeting.



Community Members

Grocery Store Owner

You own a grocery store and have concerns about the plastic bag policy. You are worried that it may drive customers away, increase your costs, and you want to know how it would be enforced. However, you are interested in selling reusable bags with your store's name on it as well.

Community Members

Retail Store Owner

You own a retail store that has already eliminated the use of plastic bags in your business by switching from single use bags to reusable bags. You can discuss how the difference in costs of these bags has affected your budget and the response you have received from your existing and new customers.

Community Members

Restaurant Owner

You own a restaurant that relies on take-out orders that use plastic bags and cups to transport food and beverages from the restaurant to the consumer's home. You understand the impact of plastic pollution and only distribute plastic silverware if customers request them. But you worry that paper bags will leak if food spills and you will lose business if you are not allowed to use plastic bags.

Community Members

Researcher

You are a researcher who is interested in learning about how the bag policy will affect people's lives and the decisions they make. You have conducted research like this in other communities and can present what you've learned.



Plastic Pollution and You

PLASTIC POLLUTION POLICY ROLE CARDS 4

Community Members

Non-governmental Organization (*non-advocate*)

You work for an organization that studies the effectiveness of laws, regulations, and other policies. You have been following the impacts to communities across the country that have created plastic bag policies and can talk about the advantages and disadvantages of these types of laws.

Community Members

Environmental Activist

You are member of the community who is worried about the impact of plastic pollution on the planet, animals, and humans. You are also concerned that plastic is produced from fossil fuels, which are contributing to many other environmental problems around the world. You are very supportive of a plastic bag policy and would like to see more laws passed to limit the use of disposable plastic items.

Community Members

Plastic Bag Manufacturer

You own a manufacturing factory that makes plastic bags and sells them to stores, restaurants, and other businesses. Plastic bags are one of your most popular items and are important to the success of your business.

Community Members

Shopper (*who supports plastic bag policy*)

You are a community member who shops at local stores and supports the plastic bag policy. You feel that plastic bags are harming the community and local environment and would like to see more shoppers switch to reusable bags.



Plastic Pollution and You

PLASTIC POLLUTION POLICY ROLE CARDS 5

Community Members

Shopper

(who opposes plastic bag policy)

You are a community member who shops at local stores and opposes the plastic bag policy. You feel bringing a reusable bag with you is inconvenient and do not want to pay any fee associated with purchasing a paper bag at the store.

Community Members

Journalist

You represent a local, regional, or national newspaper and are at the hearing to report on what happened. You will pay attention to the speakers, the community members, and councilmember's statements. You may ask additional questions to participants in the meeting.

Community Members

Audience Member

You are a member of the community who is at the public hearing to learn about the issue. You haven't made up your mind about the policy yet.

Community Members

Audience Member

You are a member of the community who is at the public hearing to learn about the issue. You haven't made up your mind about the policy yet.



Plastic Pollution and You

PLASTIC POLLUTION POLICY ROLE CARD TEMPLATE



Each card should have: *Group: (insert group name), Name: (insert role name), Description: (insert description)*

Plastic Pollution and You

PLASTIC POLLUTION POLICY STUDENT RESPONSE SHEET

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Instructions: Your class will act as a community hosting a public hearing about a possible plastic bag policy. As you prepare for the hearing, please list your role, opinion, and the research or evidence you have to back up your opinions. Answer questions 4 & 5 after the hearing.

1. Community Role:

If you did not have a role, which role do you most relate to?

2. What is your opinion of the proposed plastic bag ban?

3. List Evidence and Reasoning for Your Opinion:

A.)

SOURCE:

B.)

SOURCE:

C.)

SOURCE:

After the hearing is finished, answer the following questions...

4. What other opinions did you learn about? How did the other opinions surprise you?

5. Did your community decide to implement the bag ban? Do you agree with this decision? why or why not?

Plastic Pollution and You

Student Rubric:

	1 Emerging Proficiency	2 Approaching Proficiency	3 Demonstrates Proficiency	4 Exceeds Expectations of Proficiency
Town Hall Preparation	Develops opinion, but does not cite sources	Develops opinion, using 1 source ahead of time	Develops and submits opinion, using 2 sources	Develops and submits clear opinion, using 3 sources
Clarity of Opinion/Argument	Unclear, disorganized opinion	Somewhat clear opinion	Mostly clear and organized opinion	Well thought out, clear, strong opinion
Evidence to Support Opinion	Facts or examples are not related to or do not support opinion	1 fact or example to support opinion	2 facts and examples to support opinion	3 or more facts and examples to support opinion
Participation in Town Hall Meeting	Listens to others, but does not raise hand	Listens to others, raises hand 2+ times but is off topic	Listens to others, raises hand 2+ times, responds to others appropriately	Listens to others, uses eye contact, raises hand 3+ times and responds or provides rebuttals appropriately
Speaking Voice	Voice is not clear and/or too quiet to hear	Voice is somewhat clear but also quiet	Voice is mostly clear and loud enough to hear	Voice is clear and loud enough to hear at all times