



Department of Public Works | 860.584.6125

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 3, 2023

TO: Mayor Jeffrey Caggiano
Board of Public Works

FROM: Raymond A. Rogozinski, P.E., Director of Public Works

RE: DPW Potential Nipper Bottle Residential Redemption Program

The City has been receiving a number of complaints associated with the apparent large number of nipper bottles that litter the City. In order to address the concerns, the DPW is investigating the potential development of a program to reduce litter associated with nipper bottles. Although DPW currently cleans litter along City streets, the cleanup crew's work is targeted and concentrated in the downtown area or isolated roads prone to illegal dumping. The focus of developing a potential program concentrates on **reducing nipper bottle litter by offering a redemption deposit that would either encourage residents not to litter, or encourage the cleanup/collection of nipper bottles by residents throughout the City.**

Provisions of the current Connecticut bottle bill associated with nipper bottles were passed on June 16, 2021 SB 1037 and took effect on Oct 2021. **The Connecticut bottle bill does not include a provision to redeem a deposit on small alcohol containers (1.5 oz.) known as nipper bottles.** The state bill does impose a 5-cent surcharge on each nipper bottle sold. **The surcharge is collected from state-licensed package stores and forwarded to each municipality.** To date, Bristol has received approximately \$45,000, and an additional payment of approximately \$50,000 is anticipated. Nipper payments received by the City to date have been used to fund DPW Solid Waste operations. The bottle bill contains suggestions to use the funds for items such as hiring a recycling coordinator, purchasing a street sweeper, or installing storm drain filters. DPW job descriptions currently contain duties that include recycling coordination, and the Department operates four street sweepers. Although DPW does not recommend catch basin filters, the Department has installed several hydrodynamic separators at storm drainage outlets to collect debris.

The Department does have a small sidewalk street cleaner. The 2009 unit does not have a sweeper, but it is equipped with a vacuum and a vacuum hose. However, the suction is not strong enough to pick up nipper bottles. The unit also has difficulty picking up cups and small bags typically found in litter, therefore, DPW does not routinely use this unit. As Director, it is very frustrating that a DPW piece of equipment does not function as intended and does not meet the objectives stated at

the time of purchase. This is why, since becoming Director, I feel so strongly about renting specialized equipment prior to purchase. I do believe that an effective, small sidewalk cleaner can be used to reduce litter. Therefore, DPW will investigate modifying our current unit to install a smaller vacuum hose to increase pressure. If modifications to the unit are not effective, DPW will investigate selling/auctioning off the unit and will potentially purchase a new/alternate more effective unit (if such exists) to assist with litter collection.

A nipper redemption program can potentially be developed. Although input from the Board and public is critical to developing a successful program, a program that uses state supplied nip funds to pay residents a 5-cent deposit for collected nippers can be developed. The objectives and outline of a City Nipper Bottle Collection Program could consist of the following:

1. **Encourage residents to collect nippers by providing a 5-cent redemption.** Program would be available to all residents throughout the City. DPW does not consider counting individual nippers a time-effective solution, and would recommend using standardized bag sizes to calculate redemption payments on a per-bag basis.
2. **Offer nipper redemption locations at a frequency often enough to encourage collection throughout the year to prevent the buildup of nipper litter.** DPW recommends establishing a nipper bottle collection location on either a monthly basis (12 times a year) or on a quarterly (4 times a year) basis. The frequency of collection would depend on demand. Collection can be coordinated with designated City events. However, in order to maximize public access, DPW would recommend Saturday collections during spring, summer, and fall months.
3. **Locate city nipper collection stations/events in convenient areas to residents.** DPW recommends a location in the downtown area such as the Farmers Market when in operation. During winter months, City Hall could be used.
4. **Process and provide redemption payments in a timely manner to residents:** Provide cash payment or gift cards for each bag of nippers received. This would require two City staff members, in order to handle potential cash security measures and account closeout procedures to document redemption funds & nipper bags.
5. **City disposal of redeemed nipper bottles:** DPW will continue to investigate nipper bottle recycling options. However, as of this writing, recycling nipper bottles is not viable. DPW has confirmed that a truckload of nipper bottles can be disposed of at Covanta.

The program should be designed to ensure that all program costs associated with the proposed redemption payments program, including City staff labor (overtime) and disposal costs, will be covered by the State payment for nips to the City. Assuming redemption of 30-40 percent of nipper bottles sold, sufficient funds should be available from the State surcharge payments to Bristol to fund the City program. The development of any nipper bottle redemption program using state supplied funds will require BOF approval.

Potential program implementation challenges may be:

- a. Components of the work may not currently be part of existing union job descriptions and may require negotiations.
- b. Redemption payments may be made for nipper bottles collected outside Bristol and brought to a Bristol nipper collection center.
- c. Package stores may collect and redeem nipper bottles for Bristol redemption, resulting in large redemption payments.
- d. Security and accounting procedures associated with cash transactions for redemption payments and storing collected nipper bags. Currently all DPW cash transactions are made in DPW office during normal business hours. A monthly “pop-up” City nipper redemption center would require cash or gift card transactions outside the office with the need to store collected nipper bags (which would have a defined value) in a secure area. If a City redemption center is operated at the Farmers Market, it would be consistent with current Farmer Market vendor operations, and the new City Hall will be equipped with multiple



Department of Public Works | 860.584.6125

outside security cameras if a pop-up redemption center was to be held on a Saturday outside City Hall.

Ultimately, the success of the program will be determined by sustaining residents' interest in collecting nipper bottles to reduce litter. I would also state that the City may outsource collection and redemption to a third party, such as a local Cub Scout group, or an organization such as Brian's Angels, or the Rotary Club. If outsourced, additional payments could be made by the City to provide an incentive to the organization, in addition to the redemption payments that would be made to the organization on a per-bag basis for processing the nipper bottle collection operations.

I would also say that litter in the City is not limited to nippers and the development of a nipper program should include an education component and coordination to reduce general litter throughout the City.

Feel free to contact me with any questions/concerns at 860-584-6113.