

POLICY RECOMMENDATION— ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

RE: SINGLE-USE DISPOSABLE SHOPPING BAGS

BACKGROUND

- Residents wrote to Town Council—June 2014
- Town Council assigned REAC to conduct research and offer recommendation
- REAC has conducted education and outreach for both residents and businesses
- Over 150 U.S. communities have ordinances to regulate disposable bags—nearly 80 communities ban plastic bags
- Portland's ordinance became affective April, 2015
 - Business compliance—2% gross sales from food
- The Ordinance Committee was directed to formulate a policy recommendation after REAC's work was complete, and return the recommendation back to the Town Council

SEC. II-8-12-3.

FINDINGS.

- The use of single-use carryout bags has a negative impact on the environment and on wildlife; and
- Despite the value of single-sort recycling, plastic film from single-use plastic shopping bags binds and clogs sorting equipment and becomes a burden on recycling operations. In turn, Town taxpayers must bear costs associated with these effects on the solid waste stream; and
- The Town, through its policies, programs, and laws, supports efforts to reduce the amount of waste that must be disposed of by supporting the waste management hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle, compost, waste-to-energy, landfill); and
- Falmouth is a coastal community with an obligation to protect the ocean environment from plastic debris; and
- It is estimated that approximately two million single-use plastic shopping bags are distributed to Falmouth customers each year; and
- Studies document, and participating municipalities report, that prohibiting the free distribution of single-use carryout bags can dramatically reduce the number of those types of bags; and
- The Town Council believes that the best alternative to single-use carryout bags is the use of reusable bags for shopping, which is accomplished through prohibiting the free distribution of single-use carryout bags by stores.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- Polling at November 2014 elections
- Online survey—500+ responses
- Interviews with municipalities with ordinances
- Litter clean-ups
- Additional information at June 2015 elections
- Bag give-aways (Food Pantry, General Assistance & Shop Falmouth)
- Movie nights and discussions at library
- Participation in regional efforts
- Awarded \$500 grant from NRCM
- Interviews with Falmouth businesses (Council asked for more business input)

PROPOSED ORDINANCE

- Applies to businesses over 10,000 square feet
- Must charge and keep track of sales
- 5 cents on both paper and plastic bags
- Fees remain with the retailer

DIFFERENCES FROM PORTLAND

- Portland applies the regulations to any business that has a minimum of 2% gross sales coming from food sales. Falmouth will apply the regulations to any store with at least 10,000 square feet.
- Falmouth chose to expand its definition of a reusable bag. A reusable bag in Falmouth must be at least 4 millimeters thick, rather than a standard 2.25 millimeter thickness found in the Portland ordinance. This will ensure that moderately heavier gauge plastic bags will not be used as an alternative bag that is far less likely to be used as a reusable bag.
- Finally, Falmouth's proposal excludes commercial greenhouses/horticultural nurseries because their overall square footage is large but the retail portion of the Falmouth greenhouses/nurseries is far smaller than 10,000 square feet.