

Final Policy Recommendation re:

Single-use Disposable Shopping Bags

Presented to the Falmouth Town Council by the Recycling
and Energy Advisory Committee (REAC)

August 2015

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 effective April 2015 for businesses with >2% gross sales from food

Why are plastic bags a problem?

- Negative impacts, environmental and economic
- Can be detrimental to the marine environment
- National Geographic suggests that 5.25 trillion plastic particles weighing 269,000 tons are floating in the oceans
- Some reports suggest there are more plastic particles in the oceans than phytoplankton
- Are made from fossil fuels and do not degrade
- Clog stormwater drains
- Difficult to process at recycling plants
- *REAC estimates at least 2 million plastic bags are given out in Falmouth each year*

What are other places doing?

Over 150 U.S. municipalities have regulation—fees or ban

Alaska	2 Ordinances covering 2 municipalities
California	67 ordinances covering 88 municipalities
Connecticut	1 ordinance covering 1 municipality
Washington DC	1 ordinance covering 1 municipality
Florida	1 voluntary solution
Hawaii	4 ordinances covering the entire state
Iowa	1 ordinance covering 1 municipality
Maine	Portland
	Several other towns/cities working to draft ordinance language
Maryland	2 ordinances covering 21 municipalities
Massachusetts	8 ordinances
New Mexico	1 ordinance covering 1 municipality
New York	5 ordinances covering 5 municipalities
North Carolina	1 ordinances covering 9 municipalities
Oregon	3 ordinances covering 3 municipalities
Texas	9 ordinances covering 9 municipalities
Rhode Island	1 ordinance covering 1 municipality
Washington	11 ordinances covering 11 municipalities

Across the world....

- Australia—many bans across continent
- Chile—banned plastic bags in 2013
- China—big reduction claimed since regulation
- India—efforts to ban in various parts of country
- Ireland—bag fee in 2002; reports there has been a 20-fold decrease since that time
- Germany—1991 Packaging Ordinance resulted in drastic decrease in usage of plastic bags
- Italy—nationwide ban in 2011
- Plus many more

Mauritania, Africa - "Mauritania has banned the use of plastic bags to protect the environment and the lives of land and sea animals. More than 70% of cattle and sheep that die in the capital, Nouakchott, are killed by eating plastic bags, environment ministry official Mohamed Yahya."

In Massachusetts...

- Town of Marblehead—phased in a ban within one year 2014
- Nantucket—banned plastic bags in 1990
- Brookline—population of 50,000 ban plastic bags from large retailers (about 70 total)
- Great Barrington—population of roughly 8,000. Ban plastic with optional fee on paper
- Manchester by the Sea—population of roughly 6,000. Ban effective 2013. Town Clerk noted problems haven't existed since implementation and residents have adapted.

REAC's Education and 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 & Route 1 Celebration September event)
- 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)

Falmouth's Ordinance

Based on feedback from
45 person-to-person interviews with Falmouth businesses
potentially impacted by ordinance

Necessary exemptions:

1. Meats, produce, deli, dry cleaners
2. Leaky foods
3. If needed to prevent product damage or contamination from other purchases
4. Food Assistance community exempt from fee

YEAR 1

LARGE STORES ($\geq 10,000$ Square feet)

Charge **5 Cent Fee** for

Paper and Plastic

Single-Use Shopping Bags

Hannaford

Wal-Mart

Shaw's

Rite Aid

Staples

Goodwill

Fee must be itemized on sales receipt and stays with retailer
Community and business outreach and education continues

YEAR 2

ALL STORES

Ban on PLASTIC

Single-Use Shopping Bags

OPTIONAL fee on PAPER single use bags

Customized for Falmouth

- Phase-in approach allows businesses to use up current inventory of plastic
- Phase-in allows education and outreach during the first year
- Recordkeeping only required for 1st year
- Optional fee on paper bags 2nd year allows larger stores to make up for increased cost
- Smaller stores not required to charge unwanted fees

Falmouth business feedback

“How would a ban on single-use plastic bags affect your business?”

Little or not at all:	19
Moderately:	12
Very much affected:	13

“Do you think it would be fair to charge your customers a 5 cent fee on single use bags?”

Yes:	5
No:	25

“How feasible would it be to document how many bags you charge a fee?”

Easy:	6
Not easy:	9
Not Sure:	8

Lessons learned from Portland...

- Posting signs is important to inform customers
- Formal notification to businesses who must comply is very important
- Bar codes on bags - itemized on receipt allows for easier record keeping
- Environmental stewardship opportunities are created for businesses - change causes new thinking
- Local environmental policies must be tailored to the size and mind-set of the community. Bottom line objectives were maintained by focusing on large quantity generators.

Next Steps

1. Prepare for Public Forum: what to present, purpose, structure
2. Finalize Community and Business Education and Outreach Program
3. Define working group and create Ordinance