



TOWN OF WELLESLEY

MASSACHUSETTS

2016 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

ARTICLE 33

This is to certify that the following action was taken under Article 33 at the sixth session of the 2016 Annual Town Meeting held on April 12, 2016, in pursuance of a Warrant dated February 5, 2016.

VOTED, by declared voice vote,

That the Town vote to amend the Town bylaws by inserting a new Section 34.5C, Single-Use Plastic Check-Out Bag Reduction, as follows:

34.5C. Single-Use Plastic Check-Out Bag Reduction.

Section I Findings and Purpose

Plastic check-out bags have a significant impact on the marine and terrestrial environment, including but not limited to: 1) harming marine and terrestrial animals through ingestion and entanglement; 2) polluting and degrading the terrestrial and marine environments; 3) clogging storm drainage systems; 4) creating a burden for solid waste disposal and recycling facilities; 5) requiring the use of non-renewable fossil-fuel in their composition. Studies have shown that even alternative “compostable” or “biodegradable” bags require very specific and controlled conditions in order to biodegrade, and have potentially negative environmental effects similar to conventional plastic bags. Such bags should therefore be subject to the same restrictions as conventional plastic check-out bags.

The purpose of this Bylaw is to protect the Town’s unique natural beauty and irreplaceable natural resources by reducing the number of single-use plastic check-out bags that are distributed in the Town of Wellesley and to promote the use of reusable bags.

Section II Definitions

The following words shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

- a. "Check-out bag" shall mean a bag provided by a store to a customer at the point of sale. Check-out bags shall not include bags, whether plastic or not, in which loose produce or products are placed by the consumer to deliver such items to the point of sale or check out area of the store.
- b. "Department" shall mean the Wellesley Health Department.
- c. "Health Agent" shall mean the Health Agent for the Wellesley Board of Health or his/her designee.
- d. "Recyclable paper bag" shall mean a paper bag that is 100% recyclable and contains at least 40% post-consumer recycled content, and displays in a visible manner on the outside of the bag (1) the word "recyclable" or a symbol identifying the bag as recyclable and (2) a label identifying the bag as being made from post-consumer recycled content and the percentage of post-consumer recycled content in the bag.
- e. "Reusable Check-out bag" shall mean a sewn bag with stitched handles that is specifically designed for multiple reuse and that (1) can carry 25 pounds over a distance of 300 feet; (2) is machine washable; and, (3) is either (a) made of natural fibers (such as cotton or linen); or (b) made of durable, non-toxic plastic other than polyethylene or polyvinyl chloride that is generally considered a food-grade material that is more than 4 mils thick.
- f. "Retail Establishment" shall mean any business facility that sells goods directly to the consumer whether for or not for profit, including, but not limited to, retail stores, restaurants, pharmacies, convenience and grocery stores, liquor stores, seasonal and temporary businesses.
- g. "Thin-Film, Single-Use Plastic Check-Out Bags" shall mean those bags typically with handles, constructed of high-density polyethylene (HDPE), low density polyethylene (LDPE), linear low density polyethylene (LLDPE), polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), or polypropylene (other than woven and non-woven polypropylene fabric), if said film is less than 4.0 mils in thickness.

Section III Regulated Conduct

- a. No Retail Establishment in the Town of Wellesley shall provide Thin-Film, Single-Use Plastic Check-Out Bags to customers.
- b. If a Retail Establishment provides or sells Check-Out Bags to customers, the bags must be one of the following:
 - 1. Recyclable paper bag; or
 - 2. Reusable Check-Out bag.

Section IV Exemption: Thin-film plastic bags typically without handles which are used to contain dry cleaning, newspapers, produce, meat, bulk foods, wet items, and other similar merchandise are not prohibited under this bylaw.

Section V Enforcement

- a. The Board of Health and its Health Agent shall have the authority to administer and enforce this bylaw.
- b. For the first violation, the enforcing authority, upon a determination that a violation has occurred, shall issue a written warning notice to the establishment specifying the violation.
- c. The following penalties shall apply:
 1. A fine of \$50 shall apply for the first violation following the issuance of a written warning notice.
 2. A fine of \$100 shall apply for the second violation and each additional violation of this by-law after the issuance of a written warning notice.
- d. Fines shall be cumulative and each day on which a violation occurs shall constitute a separate offense.

Section VI Effective Date

- a. This bylaw shall take effect six (6) months following approval of the bylaw by the Attorney General or on January 1, 2017, whichever is later for Retail Establishments with a floor area equal to or exceeding 3,500 square feet or with at least two (2) locations under the same name within the Town of Wellesley that total 3,500 square feet or more. This ordinance shall take effect one (1) year after passage for Retail Establishments less than 3,500 square feet. The Director may exempt a Retail Establishment from the requirements of this section for a period of up to six (6) months upon a finding by the Director that (1) the requirements of this section would cause undue hardship; or (2) a Retail Establishment requires additional time in order to draw down an existing inventory of thin-film, single-use check-out plastic bags.

Section VII Regulations

- a. The Board of Health may adopt and amend rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes of this bylaw.

Section VIII Severability

a. If any provision of this bylaw is declared invalid or unenforceable the other provisions shall not be affected thereby.

Dated: April 15, 2016

Attest:

Kathleen F. Nagle
Town Clerk