

A Plastic Shopping Bag Ban for Duxbury

Here is a brief summary of our bylaw that will be voted on at the town meeting. The shopping bags to be banned are described as thin film plastic bags with handles that are less than 3 mils thick (a mil is 1/1000 inch), and used by a customer to transport items away from an establishment. The ban will go into effect six months after approval by the Attorney General. Stores that find they cannot make the transition within that period of time may request an additional six months to come into full compliance. Recyclable paper bags will remain available from stores. Customers will be able to bring with them any form of bag they wish. It does not require stores to charge for any bags distributed, paper or otherwise. Indeed, the Massachusetts Attorney Generals Office has ruled that towns cannot require businesses to do so. Only cities can.

Forty-one cities and towns in Massachusetts have passed similar restrictions on thin single-use plastic bags. Plymouth just passed one this past October. Our bylaw is based on theirs.

There are also many other towns throughout the State where proposals are in the works. A few weeks ago, the Boston City Council moved consideration of a ban to the fast track. Major cities like Chicago, NYC, L.A and Washington D.C. all have restrictions on these bags as do over 300 jurisdictions throughout the United States including the states of Hawaii and California. Over 60 million Americans are now living comfortably with such bans, as are over 4.5 billion people worldwide in over 40 nations, including most of Europe, China, Bangladesh, and several African countries.

The common thread weaving throughout is a growing awareness that these thin film disposable plastic bags are wasteful, environmentally unsound, are harming wildlife on land and sea, are doing great damage to our oceans and contribute to global warming. The momentum for these bylaws is building very rapidly and with good reason.