



## **Woburn Ordinance to Reduce Plastic Bag Use Now in Effect**

As of September 30, 2020, Woburn's retailers are restricted from using single-use plastic bags for shoppers' purchases. Woburn is one of more than 130 cities and towns in Massachusetts to enact this legislation.

The purpose of the ordinance, formally called Reduction of Checkout Bags by Retail Establishments (Title 8, Article IV of the 1989 Municipal Code), is "to protect the aesthetic beauty of the City of Woburn as well as the natural resources of the City by reducing the use of single-use plastic bags that are being used, discarded, and/or littered, to reduce solid waste, to protect the environment, both terrestrial and marine, and water resources, and to promote the use of reusable bags and recyclable paper bags by retail establishments in the City of Woburn."

The ban specifically requires that any bag provided by a retailer must be compostable, reusable, or if made of plastic must be greater than 3 mils thick (approximately the thickness of 3 sheets of paper). This ban does not eliminate the use of dry-cleaning bags, bags for newspapers, or bags used in the produce section of supermarkets; nor does it exclude retailers from selling plastic bags for garbage or pet waste. Craft and fair vendors are not considered retailers under this ordinance and are excluded. The Health Inspector will enforce this ordinance and retailers can be fined \$50 for the first offence and \$100 for the second and each subsequent offence. Retailers may apply for an exemption for particular reasons with the approval of the Health Inspector.

Several young people in Woburn wrote letters, made posters, hosted a table at the Recreation Department's Health and Wellness Fair and came and spoke before the Woburn City Council to advocate for a restriction on single use plastic bags in Woburn. These children participated in Girl Scouts, learned about the problem of plastics in the environment through the Change is Simple program which is offered in Woburn elementary schools, and they are spirited young leaders. Their civic pride and engagement on environmental issues that affect their futures helped inspire the City Council to pass this ordinance in 2019. We encourage Woburn residents to bring your own reusable bags whenever possible and to try to reduce our community's reliance on plastic.