

**COMMITTEE ON LIAISON
MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
WOBURN CITY HALL**

Voting Members present: President Michael Concannon, Councilor Robert Ferullo, Councilor Joanne Campbell, Councilor Richard Gately, Councilor Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Joseph Demers, Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Councilor Lou DiMambro, and Councilor Charles Viola

Also present: Board of Health Agent Jack Fralick

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Reading of previous meeting minutes: Motion made by Councilor Gately and seconded by Councilor Mercer-Bruen to waive the reading of and to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 13, 2021; all in favor, 9-0.

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Order that Committee on Liaison meet to discuss plastic bag ban enforcement with the Board of Health and City Solicitor: President Concannon said he spoke with the City Solicitor. He said the City Solicitor offered her assistance. He said if any member of the committee has questions, he or she can reach out to the City Solicitor. He said the Board of Health Agent is here and the committee can ask questions of him. Agent Fralick said the ordinance was adopted in 2019 but he was never informed that he is the enforcement agent. He said he does not know why it landed in his lap. He said that's okay, but he has not yet conducted any enforcement. He asked if anyone affiliated with the city has contacted the vendors who might be impacted by the ordinance that there is a ban on plastic bags. He said enforcement of the plastic bag ban ought to be pretty easy. He said he has a good handle on the retail end of the food industry. He said he never had any input into the plastic bag ban. He said he has gotten some calls. He said he has inspectors. He said he can notify the larger retailers about the ban. He said that should not be a real problem. He said he disagrees with the premise that all plastic bags are single use. He said the bags can be used for a lot of things. He said a paper bag is far more costly environmentally to produce. He said he does not think the ordinance will be hard to enforce, but the problem is who is going to do the legwork and tell people it exists. President Concannon said the council adopted the ordinance about a year and a half or two years ago. He said the council gave businesses time to adapt to the ordinance, but then Covid-19 became a factor and the governor put everything on hold. He said he is not aware of any correspondence that was sent by the city to retailers advising them of the ban. He said the council reached out to the Woburn Chamber of Commerce, asking it to advise its members of the ban. He said the council was approached by a member of the public who inquired about enforcement. Agent Fralick said his department can handle notification. President Concannon said the City Council wanted a chance to brainstorm ways to enforce the ordinance. Councilor Demers asked if the Board of Health has a data base of food vendors and if so maybe Agent Fralick can draw from that. Alderman Demers said there was a disconnect with the ban due to the delays with Covid. He asked if the businesses were informed the ban went

back into effect after the delay. He said not every business owner in the city looks at the city's website or subscribes to the local newspaper. He said he has walked into businesses in Ward 4 that have been using plastic bags and advised them of the ban. Agent Fralick said he has seen and read the ordinance. He said he has heard two complaints about two separate locations in two years. He said he does not expect to be overwhelmed by the number of violations. Councilor Dillon said he appreciates the efforts of the Health Dept., especially during Covid. He said it has been a long couple of years. He said the last thing the council wants to do is pile more work on the Health Dept.'s staff. He said the good news is the bigger players seem to be following the rules. He said there may be a couple of violators out there, but most businesses are complying. He said if there are members of the council who hear about violations from their constituents, they can contact Agent Fralick about enforcement. Agent Fralick agreed most of the businesses in the city are complying. Councilor Dillon said the big grocery stores jumped right on the transition. He said Lowe's seemed to be a little more resistant. He said he personally spoke to the manager and advised him it is okay to exhaust any existing inventory of plastic bags. He said if he came back in two weeks and they were still using plastic bags, he would make an issue out of it. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she has no expectation the city will send out letters to businesses advising them of the ban. She said they do not do that for anything else. She said people have a responsibility to know the law. She said she thinks Agent Fralick is doing a spot-on job. She said enforcement of the plastic bag ban is complaint-driven. She said she wants to make sure the council doesn't start down the road of sending out letters any time there is an ordinance change. Agent Fralick said he will accept any complaints that are made to members of the council. President Concannon the Woburn Chamber of Commerce did cooperate with the council's request to advise its members of the plastic bag ban, and that was helpful. Councilor Gately said Agent Fralick and his staff are doing a good job with Covid. Agent Fralick said he has a great staff. Councilor Gately said his idea is to send out advisories with the water and sewer bills. He said the city can put a piece of paper in with the bills to inform people of the plastic bag ban. He said the big companies get billed four times a year. He said it is simple to inform them that there has been a plastic bag ban in place for a couple of years. Agent Fralick said if going out and finding people isn't part of his responsibilities, he is all set. Councilor Campbell said she thinks people need to be made more aware of the plastic bag ban. She suggested informing food vendors. Agent Fralick said he sends out all his applications in May, and he can advise those people of the plastic bag ban. Councilor Campbell said she thinks businesses will start communicating with each other about the bag ban once word gets out. She said sending a slip of paper with the Board of Health applications will help. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said the idea of sending a notice with a bill or a renewal application seems smart, but she is not sure that will cover notification to everyone. She asked why the council would be opening this can of worms. She said the plastic bag ban was publicized. Agent Fralick said he will send a reminder. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said to her it seems like the process is working fine. She asked if anyone has been inundated with complaints. Agent Fralick said the state has been talking about taking over the plastic bag ban. President Concannon said it sounds like the committee is comfortable leaving enforcement of the ordinance with Mr. Fralick. President Concannon asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the committee. June Mackenzie, 20 Mt. Pleasant St., said she would be happy to hand out copies of the ordinance. She said most of the violations are occurring with the food service business. She said the idea was to get people to use re-usable bags. She said she would be happy to contact Agent Fralick. Councilor DiMambro asked if there is a gray area here where some plastic bags are acceptable. He said there are re-usable plastic

bags for sale in the checkout areas at Market Basket. Agent Fralick said re-usable plastic bags are exempt from the ordinance. President Concannon said he feels like enforcement of the ordinance is in good hands with Agent Fralick.

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Motion made by Councilor Ferullo and seconded by Councilor Mercer-Bruen to adjourn; approved, 9-0. President Concannon adjourned the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

Attest: _____
Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees