

Chapter 8.68 - BRING YOUR OWN BAG

Sections:

8.68.010 - Short Title.

This Chapter may be cited as the "Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance" of the City of Cambridge.

(Ord. 1366, 03/30/2015)

8.68.020 - Declaration of findings and policy—Scope.

The City Council hereby finds that the reduction in the use of disposable checkout bags by retail establishments in the City is a public purpose that protects the marine environment, advances solid waste reduction, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and protects waterways. This chapter seeks to reduce the number of plastic and paper bags that are being burned, used, discarded and littered, and to promote the use of reusable checkout bags by retail establishments located in the City. This chapter seeks to ensure that customers using reusable checkout bags are made aware of the need to keep those bags sanitized between uses in order to protect against the transmission of food-borne illnesses.

(Ord. 1366, 03/30/2015)

8.68.030 - Definitions.

- A. The following words shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:
1. Department means the City's Department of Public Works.
 2. Commissioner means the City's Commissioner of Public Works.
 3. Checkout bag means a carryout bag with handles provided by a retail establishment to a customer at the point of sale. A checkout bag shall not include:
 - a. Bags, whether plastic or not, in which loose produce or products are placed by a consumer to deliver such items to the point of sale or check-out area of a retail establishment;
 - b. Laundry or dry-cleaner bags; or
 - c. Newspaper bags;
 - d. Bags used to contain or wrap frozen foods, meat or fish, whether prepackaged or not, to prevent or contain moisture.
 4. Recyclable paper bag means a paper bag that is 100 percent recyclable and contains at least forty percent post-consumer recycled content, and displays the words "recyclable" and "made from forty percent post-consumer recycled content" in a visible manner on the outside of the bag.
 5. Reusable bag means a bag with handles that is specifically designed and manufactured for multiple reuse and is polyester, polypropylene, cotton or other durable material, or durable plastic that is at least three millimeters in thickness.
 6. Compostable plastic bag means a plastic checkout bag that is capable of meeting the standards set forth in the test parameters of ASTM D6400 and approved by the commissioner. Said bags must be capable of undergoing biological decomposition in a compost site such that the

material breaks down into carbon dioxide, water, inorganic compounds and biomass at a rate consistent with known compostable materials.

7. Retail establishment means any commercial enterprise, defined as the following, whether for or not for profit, including, but not limited to restaurants, pharmacies, convenience and grocery stores, liquor stores, seasonal and temporary businesses, jewelry stores, and household goods stores; however, this does not include bazaars operated by nonprofit organizations or religious institutions.

(Ord. 1366, 03/30/2015)

8.68.040 - Requirements.

- A. If a retail establishment provides checkout bags to customers, such bags shall be either a recyclable paper bag or a reusable bag. Public information advising customers to sanitize reusable bags to prevent food-borne illness must be prominently displayed or communicated upon sale.
- B. The Commissioner shall have the authority to promulgate regulations to accomplish any of the provisions of this Chapter.
- C. Charges.
 1. Retail establishments which provide recyclable paper bags or compostable plastic bags shall charge for each such bag provided not less than an amount established by regulations promulgated by the commissioner. The checkout bag charge shall be retained by the retail establishment.
 2. Any charge for a checkout bag shall be separately stated on a receipt provided to the customer at the time of sale and shall be identified as the "checkout bag charge" thereon.
- D. Each Retail Establishment as defined in Section 8.67.030, above, shall comply with this chapter.

(Ord. 1366, 03/30/2015)

8.68.050 - Effective Date.

This chapter shall take effect one year from the date of enactment.

(Ord. 1366, 03/30/2015)

8.68.060 - Exemption.

- A. The Commissioner may exempt a retail establishment from the requirements of this chapter for a period of two years upon a finding by the Commissioner that the requirements of this chapter would cause undue hardship to a retail establishment. Any exemption granted by the commissioner pursuant to this section shall expire after two years. A retail establishment may re-apply when the exemption expires. An "undue hardship" shall only be found in:
 1. Circumstances or situations unique to the particular retail establishment such that there are no reasonable alternatives to bags that are not recyclable paper bags or reusable bags, or
 2. Circumstances or situations unique to the retail establishment such that compliance with the requirements of this chapter would deprive a person of a legally protected right, or
 3. Circumstances where a retail establishment requires additional time in order to draw down an existing inventory of single-use plastic check out bags. Any retail establishment receiving an

exemption shall file with the commissioner monthly reports on inventory reduction and remaining stocks.

- B. Any retail establishment shall apply for an exemption to the Commissioner using forms provided by the department, and shall allow the Commissioner, or his or her designee, access to all information supporting its application.
- C. The Commissioner may approve the exemption request, in whole or in part, with or without conditions.
- D. The Commissioner by regulation, may establish a fee for exemption requests.

(Ord. 1366, 03/30/2015)

8.68.070 - Enforcement.

- A. Fine. Any retail establishment who shall violate any provision of this chapter shall be liable for a fine of not more than three hundred dollars and each day's violation shall constitute a separate offense.
- B. Whoever violates any provision of this chapter may be penalized by a noncriminal disposition as provided in G.L. c. 40, §21D. For purposes of this section, the Commissioner of the Department of Public Works, the Executive Director of the License Commission, the Executive Director of Inspectional Services Department and the Commissioner of the Health Commission, or their designees shall be the enforcing persons.

(Ord. 1366, 03/30/2015)

8.68.080 - Severability.

It is the intention of the City Council that each separate provision of this chapter shall be deemed independent of all other provisions herein, and it is further the intention of the City Council that if any provision of this chapter be declared to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining provisions of this chapter shall remain valid and enforceable.

(Ord. 1366, 03/30/2015)