

Article 33 – Plastic Bag Reduction

This bylaw shall be known as the Plastic Bag Reduction Bylaw.

Section 1 Purpose and Intent

The production and use of thin-film single-use plastic checkout bags have significant impacts on the environment, including, but not limited to contributing to the potential death of aquatic and land animals through ingestion and entanglement; contributing to pollution of the natural environment; creating a burden to solid waste collection and recycling facilities; clogging storm drainage systems; and requiring the use of millions of barrels of crude oil nationally for their manufacture. The purpose of this bylaw is to protect the Town's unique natural beauty and its water and natural resources by eliminating single-use plastic checkout bags that are distributed in the Town of Westborough and to promote the use of reusable bags.

Section 2 Definitions

“Checkout bag” – means a carryout bag provided by a store to a customer at the point of sale. Checkout 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 checkout area of the store.

“Grocery Store” – means a retail establishment where more than fifty percent (50%) of the gross floor area is devoted to the sale of food products for home preparation and consumption, which typically also offers home care and personal care products.

“Retail Store” – means 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.

“Reusable checkout bag” – means a bag with handles that is specifically designed and manufactured for multiple reuse and is either polyester, polypropylene, cotton or other durable material, or durable plastic that is at least 4.0 Mills in thickness.

“Thin-film single -use plastic bags” – are 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.

“Recyclable paper bag” – means a paper bag that is 100 percent recyclable and contains at least 40% post-consumer recycled content, and displays the words “recyclable” and “made from 40% post-consumer recycled content” in a visible manner on the outside of the bag.

Section 3 Use Regulations

- (A) Thin-film single-use plastic bags shall not be distributed, used, or sold for checkout or other purposes at any retail store or grocery store within the Town of Westborough.
- (B) If a grocery or retail store provides or sells checkout bags to customers, the bags must be one of the following (1) recyclable paper bags, or (2) reusable checkout bags. The grocery or retail store may charge for said bags.

- (C) Thin-film plastic bags used to contain dry cleaning, newspapers, produce, meat, bulk foods, wet items and other similar merchandise, typically without handles, are still permissible.

Section 4 Effective Date

This bylaw shall take effect six (6) months following Town Meeting approval of the bylaw. Upon application of the owner or the owner's representative, the Board of Selectman or their designee may exempt a grocery retail store from the requirements of this section for a period of up to six (6) months upon a finding by the Board of Selectman or their designee that (1) the requirements of this section would cause undue hardship; or (2) a grocery or retail store requires additional time in order to draw down an existing inventory of checkout bags.

Section 5 Enforcement

Enforcement of this bylaw shall be the responsibility of the Board of Selectman or their designee. The Board of Selectman or their designee shall determine the monitoring process to be followed, which may be limited to responding to citizen reports, incorporating the process into other town duties as appropriate.

Any grocery or retail store distributing plastic checkout bags in violation of this bylaw shall be subject to a noncriminal disposition fine as specified in Article 31 of the General Bylaws, Noncriminal Disposition of Certain Violations of Bylaws and Rules and Regulations. Any such fines shall be paid to the Town of Westborough. No licenses shall be renewed for any establishment with outstanding violations under this section.

Section 6 Severability

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

And further to amend Article 31, Section 2(C) by adding violations to Article 33 as follows:

Article 33 Violation of the Plastic Bag Reduction Bylaw – first offense – written warning; 2nd offense \$50; 3rd and subsequent offenses - \$100 per offense.