



50 Federal Street, 3rd floor  
Boston MA 02110  
(617) 423-5775  
[www.sierraclubmass.org](http://www.sierraclubmass.org)

April 1, 2023

Dear Needham Town Meeting:

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club has been actively supporting efforts to curb the use of single-use polyethylene bags at the state and local levels. Bag laws are part of a campaign to reduce unnecessary plastic waste and increase sustainability. Over the last decade, over 150 communities across the state have passed local bag laws from Williamstown to Martha's Vineyard representing well over 4 million residents.

Needham residents are estimated to use over **9 million polyethylene shopping bags per year**. There is no excuse for single-use shopping made of toxic petrochemicals derived from non-renewable, fracked natural gas and oil. Furthermore, recycling cannot solve the waste problem, because it is inconvenient and has resulted in extremely low return rates of only 5%. Bags are usually downcycled into non-recyclable products such as plastic lumber, which relies on the production of even more bags. Eliminating plastic bags from the waste stream will be a significant positive environmental action. Eliminating this non-biodegradable packaging will also beautify the Town by reducing the unsightly and permanent litter that thin plastic bags have caused. As litter, bags can be carried from the town's rivers into the Atlantic Ocean, harming wildlife all along the way. Bags eventually become micro-particles which can be ingested by aquatic animals, and enter the human food chain and drinking water.

The proposed by-law is based on comprehensive, effective laws that increase overall sustainability not just by banning single-use bags, but by setting minimum requirements for paper bags and reusable bags. Newton and Wellesley, for example, have followed this same approach. Passing this by-law will also add further momentum for a statewide bill that will include fees on paper bags. **We urge Town Meeting to vote YES on Warrant Article 41 on Plastic Bags.**

Respectfully,

Deb Pasternak  
Mass. Sierra Club, Chapter Director  
[deb.pasternak@sierraclub.org](mailto:deb.pasternak@sierraclub.org)