



City of Somerville Massachusetts

Placed on File
Nov 24, 2015 7:00 PM

Agenda Item 198630

Clint Richmond submitting comments re: the plastic bag ban.

Information

Department:	City Clerk	Sponsors:	
Category:	Public Communication	Purposes:	Public Communication

Attachments

Brookline_Plastic_Bag_model_ban (This file has not yet been converted to a viewable format)
 Brookline_Plastic_Bag_model_ban-size (This file has not yet been converted to a viewable format)

Official Text

To Ald. Niedergang:

Good to speak with you. As I indicated, I was the leader on the Brookline bag ban and have been involved directly with most bans in the Commonwealth since then as well as with proposed state legislation with the Sierra Club.

I am very excited that the City is proceeding with a bag ban. Somerville would join the ring of communities around Boston to pass a bag ban currently Brookline and Newton, and hopefully soon Natick, Cambridge, Watertown and Wellesley. This will increase the pressure to pass a state law.

I did review the November draft. As we discussed, I would caution you not to follow Brookline's law too closely, which was based on the state law proposed at that time. I attach revised and updated model laws based on ours with and without size exemptions.

Notes to the draft:

1) I regret our size exemption. We took this from the proposed state law and as the pioneer we needed to show support for that, but no other ban in the state has had one except Newton, but they are an even bigger city and note that Cambridge is not. Brookline may eliminate this exemption in the future now that bans are more commonplace. If necessary, you could give smaller stores an extra 6 months (as in the sized model law) or even a year to comply.

2) All of the bans since have a thicker minimum bag than 2.25 mils (except for Provincetown, a transitional ban that we expect to increase it at some point). The best practice is **3 mils**, which is what Newton passed for example. We have seen 2.25 mil "reusable" bags at chain stores in Brookline (Pier 1 and Stop & Shop).

3) Minor correction to your preamble:

"requiring the use of millions of barrels of crude oil nationally for their manufacture"

Most domestic bags are made of natural gas (whereas imported ones, from Vietnam for example, are made of oil). I would say "the use of the equivalent of ...". Therefore it is worth noting that plastic bags support *fracked gas*.

As I said, I think a degradable plastic bag is a fine option. You are using the same strong definition that Brookline used. As I said, no such bags are being made commercially, but hopefully will be in the future. They will be more expensive than paper in the near term too, so they are not a threat for a mass substitution, but it does fend off businesses who insist their business uniquely requires plastic bags and provides an alternative to plastic bag manufacturers.

I am happy to provide any assistance, technical or advocacy, on this ordinance.

Best regards,

Clint Richmond
Mass. Sierra Club, Legislative Action Committee

Meeting History

Mar 12, 2015 7:00 PM Video **Board of Aldermen** **Regular Meeting**

Alderman Heuston requested to waive the reading of item 70 and refer it to the Legislative Matters Committee. There being no opposition, the motion was approved.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

Mar 19, 2015 6:00 PM **Legislative Matters Committee** **Committee of the Whole**

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

May 7, 2015 6:30 PM **Legislative Matters Committee** **Committee Meeting**

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Sep 30, 2015 6:30 PM Video **Legislative Matters Committee** **Committee of the Whole**

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Oct 15, 2015 6:00 PM **Legislative Matters Committee** **Committee of the Whole**

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Nov 19, 2015 6:00 PM **Legislative Matters Committee** **Committee Meeting**

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

Nov 24, 2015 7:00 PM Video **Board of Aldermen** **Regular Meeting**

RESULT: PLACED ON FILE

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