



## City of Somerville Massachusetts

Work Completed  
Nov 25, 2014 7:00 PM

### Agenda Item 196628

**That the City Solicitor provide this Board with information regarding plastic bag reduction techniques utilized in other MA municipalities, as well as whether the city can place a deposit fee on such bags or regulate their use to contain free advertisers.**

#### Information

<b>Department:</b>	Board of Aldermen	<b>Sponsors:</b>	Ward Six Alderman Rebekah L. Gewirtz, Ward Five Alderman Mark Niedergang
<b>Category:</b>	Order	<b>Purposes:</b>	Order

#### Official Text

That the City Solicitor provide this Board with information regarding plastic bag reduction techniques utilized in other MA municipalities, and determine whether the city may regulate the use of plastic bags to contain free advertising circulars delivered to homes, as well as whether the city can place a deposit fee on plastic bags.

#### Meeting History

**Apr 10, 2014 7:00 PM Video Board of Aldermen Regular Meeting**

Alderman Gewirtz referenced an article published in the Boston Globe on April 6, 2014 regarding the success of implementing a \$0.05 fee for single-use plastic bags. She stated she would like to find out what other communities have done and identify best practices. She commented on the success of the city's plastic bag recycling program and stated she feels people will move quickly to reusable bags once a plan is in place. Alderman Niedergang asked that he be added to the order and suggested the City Solicitor investigate whether the city can regulate the use and recycling of the plastic bags associated with free advertising circulars. President White said that the City Solicitor is working on that issue and a recommendation should be forthcoming.

**RESULT: APPROVED**

**May 27, 2014 5:30 PM Environment and Energy Special Committee Meeting - old**

Mr. Buckley spoke about ordinances in other communities and said that he believes that such an ordinance in Somerville would be defensible. He noted, however, that placing a deposit fee on plastic bags would be problematic. Members discussed the legislative process involved and the timeline and Mr. Boukili requested that the item be kept in committee until a new Environmental Programs Manager is hired.

Alderman Gewirtz suggested modeling Somerville's ordinance after Brookline's and recommended a threshold of 5,000 (or more) square feet. Members made various recommendations and requested that the Law Department prepare a draft ordinance for the committee's review.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**Oct 22, 2014 6:00 PM Environment Committee Meeting**

 **Draft**

**and Energy  
Special  
Committee -  
old**

Mr. Buckley reported that 5 other MA towns are taking similar actions. All were reviewed by the Attorney General's Office and approved as being within the authority of selectmen, etc. and being a proper use of its policing powers. Mr. Buckley reviewed a draft ordinance that mirrored Brookline's and pointed out that Somerville already has 3 ordinances dealing with plastic bags. Alderman Gewirtz suggested that the fines be changed to increase the 2nd offense to \$100 and the 3rd to \$300, without limiting the city's ability to impose fines within a certain time period.

Alderman Niedergang discussed how manufacturers might avoid being affected by this ordinance by changing the thickness of their plastic bags. The detrimental effects of some compostable and/or biodegradable bags were also discussed. Mr. Sellers-Garcia spoke with Brookline's Public Health Director and was told that compostable/biodegradable bags not readily available. Brookline observed that, after enacting its ordinance, it appeared that plastic bag use was entirely replace by paper bags, (although there is no factual data on this). Ms. Lowitz spoke about the litter caused by plastic bags and suggested that compostable/biodegrade bags would probably still end up as litter.

Currently, there are 200 cities/towns in 17 states banning plastic bags. Chairman Ballantyne will schedule a public hearing on the matter.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**Nov 20, 2014 6:00 PM**

**Environment  
and Energy  
Special Committee Meeting  
Committee -  
old**

 **Draft**

Mr. Buckley stated that it was suggested he follow Brookline's model when developing the ordinance. Chairman Ballantyne's motion to ban plastic bags was approved.

**RESULT: WORK COMPLETED**

**Nov 25, 2014 7:00 PM Video**

**Board of  
Aldermen Regular Meeting**

**RESULT: WORK COMPLETED**

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