Ban the Bag: 
Back off 
Single- Use Plastics.

by B. Patrick Conaway

Big Heart Little Feet

Sources: Center for Biological Diversity, <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org>
Massachusetts Sierra Club, <http://www.sierraclubmass.org>
The Problem: Items of convenience threaten our earth and oceans.

- ~ 500 billion plastic bags are used per year worldwide
- Americans use about 100 billion plastic bags per year
- Massachusetts uses an estimated 2 billion plastic bags per year
Where do they go?

- **Few:** recycled (less than 10%)
  Some recycled overseas
- **Many:** end up in landfills, or incinerators
- **Most:** loose as plastic pollution, eventually making their way into our rivers and streams and ultimately the oceans
“Convenient” and “Cheap”

- **However**, the environmental cost far exceeds the cost retailers pay to provide them. It costs 2¢ to make one, and 17¢ to clean one up.
The Oceans Need Your Help

- Single use plastic check-out bags *threaten the oceans* and *our earth*

- Debris in our ocean swirling in giant spiral (gyres)
  - Plastic beverage containers
  - Styrofoam
  - Plastic Bags
• **Billions of pounds of plastic:** found in swirling convergences making up about 40 percent of the world’s ocean surfaces.

• **80 percent of pollution** enters the ocean from the land.
The Great Pacific Garbage Patch:

- In the *North Pacific Gyre* off the coast of California
- Largest ocean garbage site in the world
- This floating mass of plastic *is twice the size of Texas*, with plastic pieces outnumbering sea life six to one.
● Only a small percentage of ocean plastics float at the sea surface

● Most plastics are dispersed throughout the water column, resting on the seafloor, trapped in Arctic ice, or inside ocean animals. -- The Ocean Conservancy
They blow. They cling. They float

- Plastic bags take a LONG time to break down
  - Do not dissolve into benign substances
- Instead, fracture into smaller and smaller bits called “microplastics”
Here in Natick:

- The bags are everywhere
- Our bags are carried by wind and waterways to the ocean

(West Natick Train Station)
Chase Ice Arena - DPW Driveway

Dug Pond - looking southwest from Campus Drive
California Bans the Bag

The State of California estimates that approximately 19 billion plastics bags are used annually; cities, counties and other agencies were spending $25 million per year to collect and transport them to landfills.

- California passed a statewide ban in September 2014
Brookline Bans the Bag

- Passed two years ago at Town Meeting.
- **First Year:** devoted to adjustment and education
- **Second Year:** opportunity for waivers
- **Implemented** January 2013
- Applies to stores > 2500 sq. ft.
  or gross sales > than $1 million
Newton Bans the Bag

- **Newton Board of Aldermen** adopted an Ordinance to Ban **single-use plastic carry-out bags** in January 2015
- **To be administered** by their Board of Health and Human Services
- **To be implemented** July 2015
- Applies to stores > 3500 sq. ft. or a total of two or more stores in Newton with > 3500 sq. ft.
- **Waivers** (up to 6 months) **may be obtained** by applying to the Commissioner of Health and Human Services
Cambridge Bans the Bag

- Dubbed the “Bring Your Own Bag” bill — or BYOB
- **The goal:** turn Cambridge into the first municipality in the state requiring retailers to charge for paper bags (10¢)
- **And:** stress the importance of reusable canvas or fabric bags
- A city councilor has proposed that the City purchase 10,000 reusable shopping bags to help consumers and retailers w/ the transition
Results and feedback:

- The Brookline Board of Health manages monitoring and compliance. Thus far no problems.
- No merchants or stores have gone out of business as a result.
- Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, Walgreens, Stop and Shop all complying without complaint.
Other Massachusetts Communities that have Banned the Bag

Falmouth
Great Barrington
Manchester-by-the-Sea
Marblehead
Nantucket
Newburyport
Provincetown
The Proposed Natick By-Law

If passed at 2015 Spring Town Meeting:

- Would incorporate the basics of the Brookline Ban the Bag By-Law

We hope to work with local merchants and businesses to build support and ease the transition by introducing incentives to join the

Natick Goes Green Project

at the Mill St. Bridge (W. Natick)
Natick Goes Green

Join us in our campaign to encourage local businesses to adopt earth-friendly behaviors.

Participating businesses will receive recognition on the Natick Goes Green Facebook page that will encourage locals to visit the business and support their efforts.

Our first recruit: LoLA’s Italian Groceria
Our mission:

To encourage local businesses to join us in a movement to back off single-use plastic and adopt more sustainable practices while growing their business among many customers who would prefer to buy products from stores that embrace green principles and practices.

Like us on Facebook “Natick Goes Green” For more information contact:
Pat Conaway: bpconaway@gmail.com or
Abby Fournier: abbykfournier@gmail.com
Level 1 (light green) – Earth’s Friend

- Establish in-store recycling for bottles, cans, and paper, “buddied up” with a trash container
Level 2 (green) – Earth’s Advocate

- In store recycling with the option of outdoor recycling (depending on layout)
- Offer compostable earth-friendly products (containers, plates, utensils)
- Offer paper bags made of 100% post consumer fibers and/or reusable plastic bags made of recycled content
Baldwin Hill Art & Framing is the EARTH'S ADVOCATE
Green practices:
- Recycles leftover materials
- Uses earth-friendly products for frames
- Collects scraps for teachers to use for art projects

Like us on Facebook: “Natick Goes Green”
For more information contact:
Pat Conway: tscconway@gmail.com or
Abby Fournier: abbyfournier@gmail.com

Palettes is the EARTH'S ADVOCATE
Green practices:
- In store recycling for paper/bottles/cans
- Corn starch-based and paper cups
- Instructor canvases are reused
- Cardboard palettes are recycled after use

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Abby Fournier: abbyfournier@gmail.com

Five Crows is the EARTH'S ADVOCATE
Green practices:
- Recycling for paper/bottles/cans
- Offer paper bags as an alternative to plastic bags
- Sells art made from recycled materials

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Abby Fournier: abbyfournier@gmail.com

Lola’s Italian Groceria is the EARTH'S ADVOCATE
Green practices:
- Recycling for paper/bottles/cans
- Compostable earth-friendly products
- Paper bags of 100% post consumer fibers
- Reusable bags of recycled content

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Level 3 (dark green) – Earth’s Guardian

- Avoid all polystyrene and foam products (cups, take out containers, utensils, straws, etc.)
- Offer inexpensive washable/reusable products (if applicable)
- **Do not provide single-use plastic carry-out bags**