

What You Need to Know About the New Mansfield Plastic Waste Reduction Bylaw

Why does Mansfield need a bylaw for shopping bags?

- Based on US averages, Mansfield uses and discards 20,000 plastics bags EVERY DAY.
- Plastic bags harm the environment, killing marine and terrestrial animals, polluting watersheds, clogging storm drains and harming the natural beauty of our town.
- Based on full lifecycle analyses of different options, reusable bags are significantly better for the environment.
- The new bylaw is intended to reduce litter and to ensure that most shopping bags distributed in town can be recycled.

What does the new bylaw say about plastic bags?

- No thin-film plastic check-out bags less than 4 mils thick may be distributed by retailers in Mansfield. "Check-out bag" means a bag provided to a customer at the point of sale.
- Produce bags, newspaper bags, garbage bags, dog-waste bags, dry-cleaning bags and other thin-film plastic products such as plastic wrap are exempt.
- Non-retail businesses, such as medical or dental offices, are not covered by the new bylaw. However, **all** business owners are encouraged to refrain from distributing plastic bags.
- Retailers that offer exempted plastic bags must now provide for the collection and proper disposal of plastic bags as outlined in the bylaw.

What does the new bylaw say about paper bags?

- Paper bags are allowed as follows:
 - Must be 100 percent recyclable (e.g. no non-recyclable string or ribbon handles, no heavily inked surfaces, no glossy coating); and
 - Must have at least 40 percent post-consumer recycled content; and
 - Must be labeled in a way to show the above conditions are met.

When does the new bylaw take effect?

- For stores 3,500 square feet or larger, the new bylaw will take effect on November 1, 2018.
- For stores smaller than 3,500 square feet, the new bylaw will take effect on May 15, 2019.
- We strongly encourage all local businesses to start implementation well before the deadline to ensure any questions that arise can be addressed.

What's being done to help those who can't afford reusable bags?

- This bylaw allows for free paper bags.

How will the new bylaw be enforced?

- The Mansfield Board of Health is responsible for enforcing the new bylaw.
- The Health Agent has the authority to grant a single six month extension for compliance if the law causes undue hardship to a business, or if a business needs more time to draw down its inventory of bags.
- Businesses not in compliance will initially receive a written warning notice, followed by a \$50 fine for the first violation after the notice, and a \$100 fine for the second and all subsequent violations.

Where can I find out more about the Mansfield plastic waste reduction bylaw?

- Visit our website at <http://www.mansfieldma.com/town-government/departments/department-public-health/> or contact the Health Agent at adpalmer@mansfieldma.com or at 508-261-7366.