



# TOWN OF SWAMPSCOTT

## OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN COMMITTEE

ELIHU THOMSON ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
22 MONUMENT AVENUE, SWAMPSCOTT, MA 01907

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Naomi Dreeben, Chair  
Board of Selectmen  
Swampscott Town Hall  
22 Monument Avenue  
Swampscott, MA 01907

May 10, 2018

RE: Article 18 – Adoption of Bylaw Prohibiting Plastic Bags

Dear Ms. Dreeben:

At its regularly scheduled meeting on May 8, 2018, the Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee voted unanimously to support adoption of the new Bylaw prohibiting plastic bags as sponsored by the Board of Selectmen and described in Article 18 of the 2018 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Report. In your report on this Article at the upcoming Town Meeting, we hope you will share our Committee's reasons for supporting this important Bylaw as set forth below.

The fact that there are way too many plastic bags floating around – cluttering our homes and blighting our streets by flapping on the tops of trees – is not debatable. Something needs to be done and Swampscott should follow the lead of its neighboring communities and adopt its own prohibition of plastic bags.

While there are many reasons to limit distribution of single-use plastic bags in Swampscott, our Committee's support of the new Bylaw will focus on the negative impact these bags have on the region's open space and recreational resources:

- Discarded plastic bags are often carried by wind from landfills, garbage trucks, boats and careless consumers and subsequently caught in trees and shrubs in our parks and public open spaces, creating a visual blight that reduces the quality of the outdoor experience here in town.
- Plastic bag material does not biodegrade—it lasts forever – though, over time, it will fracture into smaller and smaller bits, or microplastics, that enter the environment and, ultimately, into our food chain and water supply.
- Marine resources are particularly hard hit by discarded single-use plastic bags. As noted in the Ocean Conservancy's 2011 report, plastic bags make up the third largest type of litter from land-based sources found on U.S. coasts.<sup>1</sup> Marine animals, from shellfish to whales ingest the floating plastic. Clearly, Swampscott should be concerned about this negative impact, as

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<sup>1</sup> *Tracking Trash: 25 Years of Action for the Ocean*, March 2011  
[https://issuu.com/oceanconservancy/docs/marine\\_debris\\_2011\\_report\\_oc](https://issuu.com/oceanconservancy/docs/marine_debris_2011_report_oc)

the Town's recent master plan (*Swampscott 2025: The Master Plan*), recognizes the special value, both economic and recreational, our beaches and ocean waters have for Swampscott.

- Finally, adoption of this new Bylaw will support the ongoing regional effort to improve the environment.<sup>2</sup> Marblehead adopted a similar bylaw in 2014, and, in Salem, the prohibition of single-use plastic bags took effect on January 1, 2018. It makes little sense, from a regional perspective, for Swampscott to continue distribution of plastic bags that can easily cross town lines into neighboring communities transported by wind, tides and consumer negligence.

Thank you for your sponsorship of this important Article. It is a significant step toward enhancing the open space and recreational resources in Swampscott and the North Shore region.

Sincerely,



Tania Lillak, Chair  
Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee

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<sup>2</sup> As of this date, 74 cities and towns in Massachusetts are listed on the [massgreen.org](https://massgreen.org) website as having approved plastic bag regulations.