

League of Women Voters of Lexington

Election Guide for the Monday March 5, 2018 Lexington municipal election

Question for Town Meeting Member candidates: A motion to ban or reduce plastic bags in Lexington may come before Town Meeting this year. Some nearby towns such as Bedford and Concord have such restrictions. What are your thoughts about banning or reducing plastic bags in Lexington?

Precinct 1

7 three-year terms

Joel A. Adler

E-mail: janamba@verizon.net

Jean Cole

E-mail: jeancole@rcn.com

Phone: 781-861-8326

Community Activities:

- Town Meeting Member since 1990
- Lexington High School volunteer, 1989-2017

Response:

We got along fine without plastic bags till the stores started using them, and I am sure we will get over the inconveniences of not having them. We had no idea what a problem we were creating but now that we do know, we have to stop using them. The presenters at the Selectmen's meeting appeared to have laid the groundwork for a successful implementation. I am so grateful they have been willing to put the time and effort into this project.

Robert W. Cunha

E-mail: robert.cunha20@gmail.com

MaryAnn Stewart

E-mail: f.m.a.stewart@gmail.com

Phone: 781-862-2178

Community Activities:

- League of Women Voters of Lexington
- Lexington Democratic Town Committee
- Progressive Democrats of Massachusetts, Lexington
- Town Meeting Members Association

Response:

According to the Massachusetts Sierra Club, as of December 2017 sixty-one cities and towns have passed bans on single-use plastic shopping bags. Lexington should join with these Bay State communities and prohibit the use of one-time-use plastic bags. These prohibitions are necessary because the bags do not decompose, they contribute to pollution and fill up landfills, and they can cause environmental damage.

Interestingly, a proposal in the State House, H.2121, passed out of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture with a favorable report on a vote of 13-1. Under the legislation, stores and restaurants in the Commonwealth would be barred from giving customers single-use-plastic bags beginning on August 1, 2019, and it would not pre-empt cities and towns from further limiting single-use carryout bags, but it would render “null and void” any ordinances or bylaws in place before enactment of the bill. The bill further articulates that paper bags that aren’t made of recycled materials would also be banned, which directs the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to write regulations to enforce the policy.

Until such time as the State Legislature sees fit to bring the proposal up for a vote in the House and Senate, Town Meeting should vote to prohibit the use of single-use plastic bags.

Bella D. Tsvetkova

E-mail: btsvetko@yahoo.com

Judith Zabin

E-mail: ajzabin@gmail.com

Phone: 781-861-0956

Community Activities:

I have been a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 1 since 1976. I value my memberships in the Lexington League of Women Voters and CLC (Citizens for Lexington Conservation) which I have had for about 50 years. I served for several years on the Selectman's Advisory Human Services Committee.

Response:

I am very much in favor of a bylaw that would ban or restrict plastic bags in Lexington by requiring local businesses to curtail their use. I would support Lexington joining 46 other MA cities and towns, including our nearby neighbors, Bedford and Concord, which

have already enacted this restriction. Plastic is not biodegradable and the disastrous environmental impact of plastic bags in our landfill is unchallenged.

Sandhya (Sandy) Beebee

E-mail: srbb27@zoho.com

Phone: 914-841-2158

Community Activities:

Current:

- Lexington Capital Expenditures Committee
- Liaison to Commission on Disability
- Harrington Community Relations Chair
- Harrington Math Nights / Harrington Spring Fair Games Coordinator
- Harrington Green Team Member

Previous:

- Harrington PTA President (2014-2016)
- Lexington Parents Advocacy Group (LPAG)

Response:

I support the ban on plastic bags in Lexington. I think the inconvenience to the consumer from such a ban would be easily overcome; shoppers increasingly will get used to bringing reusable bags and retailers will likely offer paper bag alternatives. The beneficial impact to the environment from reduced trash and lower energy consumption is a strong positive. Sixty surrounding communities in Massachusetts are taking steps to ban single-use plastic bags. Lexington should join them.

Sudhir Ranjan

E-mail: ransud@gmail.com

Phone: 781-538-5250 / 412-680-1267

Community Activities:

Motivation is one of the critical determinants of effective engagement in community affairs. My interest comes from my own positive experience and from my love of learning. I believe that many Town issues are intricately connected to one another. I have been an intermittent participant and volunteer at various school activities and town wide events including community events organized by Indian Americans of Lexington. The purpose of selecting the candidacy of Town Meeting Member is to engage myself actively, assist in a non-partisan manner in any effort to enhance overall community development and save money before any tax increase is requested. I am new and I am ready to learn. With more involved citizens, and out-of-the-box thinking, I believe we can keep Lexington vibrant, more affordable and all-inclusive for our children and our senior citizens.

Response:

Though the bill might contain the details about plastic bags, but I would like to elaborate a bit more here before I jump to any conclusion.

Plastic bags are made up of polyethylene, a polymer of ethylene and a by-product acquired from natural gas industries. Since ethylene (derived from ethane gas) is highly energetic, so we can't use it for domestic and commercial purposes. As long as we are drilling petroleum, we need to burn ethane gas. And, burning this will have similar impact on environment in terms of producing greenhouse gases.

However, it is true that plastic bag is hazardous to soil as well as to general health. It ends up either in landfills or as litter on multiple places. We throw away some millions and millions of plastic bags, mainly grocery bags each year, which is equal to drilling petroleum just for convenience. There should be a balance. The environmental pollution can be brought down to near zero level, if we run an awareness and consciousness campaign on how to dispose plastic in a responsible and pragmatic manner.

1. We should first stop dumping plastic bags to our current waste disposal. A separate bin disposal can be made available for collection and recycling, and thereby eliminating / minimizing all possibilities of environmental pollution.
2. Working in tandem, and phasing the plastic bags out with a 5- or 10-year plan, the possibility of using compostable or reusable bags is another option. A minimum fee can be levied in this regard.

Keeping the balance in mind, I would prefer to support any motion **on reducing plastic bags in Lexington**, and will ask plastic bag suppliers to use the following slogan for mindfulness:

“Careless disposal & littering plastic bags are injurious to human civilization. Save the Earth.”