

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 5

7 three-year terms; 1 two-year term

Anil Ahuja

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Community Activities:

- Member of the Town Meeting Executive Committee for the past 2 years
- Committee Member of Indian Americans of Lexington (IAL) - active participant of various events organized by IAL
- In charge of photography and video for IAL events
- Organizing Committee Member of Festival of Colors in Lexington, an event which will occur annually, this year scheduled for May 20 at Hastings Park

Response:

I support all measures which will result in banning or reducing plastic bags in Lexington, as long as it does not pose an undue burden on the general populace. Stores should be encouraged to sell reusable bags at a reasonable price. If the customer insists on a plastic bag, a nominal charge of 5 to 10 cents should be considered.

John Hayward

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Community Activities:

- Former Treasurer and Board Member of Munroe Center for the Arts
- Former Board Member of LexMedia

Response:

Several years ago, banning plastic bags came up before TM. The motion was defeated because plastic would be replaced with paper and lead to chopping down more trees.

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Response:

Several towns in MA a similar ban in Lexington.

Plastic bags are a convenient way to carry our purchased goods when we go shopping.

They are a part of our modern lives, and we don't tend to think much about them.

However, this convenience carries a very high cost to the environment, and negatively affects human health.

I strongly support reducing plastic bag usage. Some of the supportive facts are plastic bags pollute our land and water. Due to their lightweight, the plastic bags can travel long distances by wind and water. They litter our landscapes, get caught in fences and trees, float around in waterways, and eventually make their way into the world's oceans. Plastic bags are made from non-renewable resources which contribute to climate change. The majority of plastic bags are made of polypropylene, a material that is made from petroleum and natural gas; the bags don't degrade. The plastic bags create greenhouse gases, which contribute to global climate change by absorbing sunlight. Producing these bags is also very energy intensive which could be spent on something more useful. Plastic bags don't degrade, they end up in pieces that may end up being consumed by wildlife either on the ground or ocean. When the ocean life consumes the plastic, they process it and make pollutants like PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl) and

PAHs (Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), which are known to be hormone-disrupting chemicals. These are harmful to human health when they consume let's say, sea food.

If it comes to the cost of the bags, cleanup is more expensive than production. Recycling rate is only 5%. The negative impact is very real to deal with. Reusable bags are very convenient and production of these can create some jobs. To date, about 40 countries and municipalities around the world have instituted plastic bag bans. The United Nations Environmental Program Secretariat has recommended a ban on all plastic bags globally.

For those governments that are opposed to full bans on plastic bags, another option is to institute a plastic bag tax, where consumers would pay a small fee for each plastic bag. This strategy has been proven to greatly reduce plastic bag usage by consumers. New York city is considering this after looking at countries like Ireland who implemented plastic bag tax. I would support either full ban or a small plastic bag tax that allow the consumer to decide their usage.

Richard L. Neumeier

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Response:

After being a Town Meeting member in precinct 3 for 25 years, my wife and I downsized and moved to a condo in precinct 5. I have been a member of the Appropriation Committee for almost 6 years. Previously I served on the Recreation Committee. The time is long overdue for the Town to regulate the use of plastic bags.