

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 8

7 three-year terms; 1 two-year term

Ingrid H Klimoff

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Lisa J. Mazerall

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Community Activities:

- Former Maria Hastings Elementary School PTA Secretary, co-President and 5th Grade Activities Chair 2009-2015
- Lexington Little League Softball Volunteer / Manager 2010-2017
- Lexington Catholic Community - Catechist 2010-2015
- Town Meeting Member Precinct 9 2011-2014, Precinct 8 2015-present
- Moms on the Mound (Lexington in-town Women's Softball League) - 2014-present

Response:

I believe that environmental stewardship is extremely important and we must also take into consideration state legislation and input from our Lexington retailers.

James A. Osten

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Phone: 781-861-9079

Community Activities:

- Town Meeting member for 20+ years
- Town Meeting Members Association – served as Chair
- Water Sewer Abatement Board
- Zoning Board of Appeals

- Genesis Battle Green Run Board
- Lexington Ski Club

Response:

I support reducing plastic waste in general, particularly because plastic waste in the world's oceans will soon exceed the weight of fish and also because China is banning the import of some plastic waste thus creating a disposal problem. Massachusetts residents account for about 70 plastic one time use bags per person per year for a state total of 347 million. Communities that have limited use of plastic bags or placed a small fee on use have seen dramatic reductions in plastic bags. I support restrictions on plastic bags allowing some exemptions for health, safety and small business and with a result of customers of large volume stores moving to reusable bags.

Regulation by the Board of Health would help to address health and safety issues with packaging particularly for produce, meat and prepared foods. Hopefully discussion in town meeting would highlight the high bacteria count on cloth bags and periodic requirement to clean.

Lexington is losing small retail businesses and has too many empty storefronts. Often businesses use the packaging to advertise their products and services. Consideration of how the impacts of plastic bag restrictions on small businesses can be mitigated is important. There are numerous fast food establishments and restaurants in Lexington that provide take out service, all with lots of packaging and bags. Also, many tourists are one-time visitors.

Methods of regulating bag use include, bans, fees and size limits. Outright bans require careful consideration of exemptions. Charging a fee for bags is cumbersome but does dramatically reduce use of plastic bags. Some areas ban plastic bags but allow stores to charge for paper bags thus encouraging reusable bags. Some apply the ban only to large volume stores such as grocery. Size limits (handles greater than 1.5 mils I thickness) are required in Provincetown. Thus, there are several existing options for Lexington to choose from all of which reduce plastic and increase reusable bags.

We should look for change that is net beneficial for town goals. Shifting Lexington from plastic bags to paper would increase the volume of waste until people switch to reusable bags. Therefore, the priority should be enacting policies that encourage the switch to reusable bags.

Sanjay Padaki

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Jessie Steigerwald

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Community Activities:

- School Committee member since 2009 - Chair, Finance Subcommittee; former Chair, Policy Subcommittee
- Cary Library Trustee, Executive Committee (2016-present)
- Member, Lexington Council for the Arts (former Secretary)
- Town Meeting member since 2008
- 8th Grade Mock Town Meeting Program (TMMA & LPS Social Studies Dept.), Volunteer Coordinator (2012-present)
- Former member, Lexington 300th Anniversary Celebration Committee
- Author “We Are Lexington”

Response:

I am enthusiastic about taking action to reduce plastic bag use in Lexington. Since 2013, the 8th grade students at Clarke and Diamond have participated in a Mock Town Meeting in their social studies classrooms. Each year they have debated the pros/cons of a mock article to ban the sale of single-serving plastic bottles made of PET and as I listen to their voices describing the immediate and long-term harmful impact plastics have on our environment, I feel we have a responsibility to take care of each other here in Lexington, and to do our part to make the water and air healthier and safer for all living beings in our state, country, and the world. We have the resources to reuse cloth bags, mesh bags, or shopping baskets. It is time to take bolder steps and I would support a thoughtful approach. I am mindful that our retailers need to provide customer service. Some towns are charging for the use of paper bags as an alternative. Ideally, we would help people switch to reusable cloth bags. Some communities have volunteer groups willing to create handmade cloth bags that can be borrowed from local stores. I would volunteer to help with such an initiative. I would rather have tourists take home something creative from a visit to Lexington – and not just another wasted plastic product.

Weidong Wang

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Lin Jensen

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Phone: 781-325-5237

Community Activities:

- Lexington resident since 2005
- BS in Psychology from Beijing University, MBA at Columbia Business School
- Worked in corporate treasury at Honeywell
- Born in Beijing China; also lived in Frankfurt Germany
- Co-President of Maria Hastings Elementary School PTA (2013-15)

- One of the leaders in the LPS Parent Green Teams; led the creation of the network of parents from all nine schools to share best practices in waste reduction inside and outside of school
- Successfully advocated for Lexington Public School to eliminate the use of Styrofoam lunch trays, 400,000 annually
- Helped establish the current compost pickup program at Lexington Public Schools, diverting 6,000 pounds of organic waste each year from the incinerator to farmland
- Researched for LPS and School Committee on the environmental impact of switching from single-use food service ware to reusable ones; as a result, the School Committee unanimously voted to add a dishwasher in the new Hastings building.

Andrew F. March

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Brielle Meade

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Community Activities:

Brielle (Kissel) Meade is an economist in Lexington with an education and consulting background in public policy and planning. Brielle grew up in town (Lexington High School Class of 2000) and recently moved back with her wife to raise her family. She has worked in Lexington for the past 12 years at Eastern Research Group, Inc. supporting government clients with economic analyses, regulatory development and analysis, program evaluations, process improvement projects, and policy and decision-making support.

Brielle holds an M.S. in Economics and Urban / Environmental Policy & Planning from Tufts University, as well as undergraduate degrees in both Economics and Business Administration from the University of New Hampshire.

Response:

Although eliminating or reducing plastic bags sounds like a good idea, I would need more details of what the ban or reduction would entail before committing to being for or against it. For instance, would the ban be aimed at only large retailers, or all Lexington businesses? How would it be enforced, and who would enforce it? Would the goal of the ban be to reduce Lexington's use of plastic, or do we have data that show plastic bags are an actual issue for Lexington's solid waste, litter, or storm drain management? The research from other communities doesn't seem clear on whether single-use plastic bag bans actually help towns reduce their environmental impact. Some studies show that bans simply lead to consumers using and throwing away thicker reusable plastic and cloth bags, producing more waste than before the ban. In my own home, we reuse these plastic bags for bagging our household trash; if there were a ban, we would have to buy other plastic bags for our trash cans anyway. I would not be prepared to vote for adding

regulations that would burden local retailers and consumers unless the benefits can be proven to outweigh the costs.

Instead of a ban, I would support alternatives such as a consumer education campaign about recycling plastic bags properly and encouraging retailers to always ask if a patron needs a bag at all. Lexington is also evaluating our trash and recycling options in anticipation of the current contract ending in June 2018; perhaps we could consider adding plastic bags to our curbside recycling program to make it easier for residents to recycle bags.