



March 17, 2023

Dear Newton City Council:

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club has been actively supporting efforts to reduce waste and curb the use of single-use plastic at the state and local levels. In the last eight years, more than 150 communities across the state from Williamstown to the Cape have passed local plastic pollution laws. This represents over 4 million residents or two-thirds of the state's population.

State communities continue to consider and pass additional laws restricting single-use plastics. Newton's "Sustainable Food Service Ware, Packaging, and Single Use Ordinance" incorporates many successful laws from other communities, as well as proposed state legislation.

There is no excuse for single-use plastic made of petrochemicals derived from non-renewable, fracked natural gas and oil. Most of these products such as balloons, glitter, stirrers, and black plastic cannot be recycled at all. Recycling, even when possible, cannot solve the plastic waste problem, because it is inconvenient, inefficient and has resulted in return rates of less than 10%. Furthermore, plastics are usually turned into non-recyclable products such as fleece or plastic lumber, which rely on the production of yet more plastic.

Eliminating additional plastic foodware and other items in the Newton ordinance from the waste stream will be a significant positive environmental action. Removing such non-biodegradable materials will also beautify the city by reducing the unsightly and permanent litter that plastic has caused. Items such as plastic foodware, straws, plastic floss sticks, and water bottles frequently end up as litter throughout the city. These items can be carried by wind and water into the Charles River and ultimately the Atlantic Ocean, harming wildlife all along the way. Microbeads and microplastic litter can be ingested by aquatic animals and enter the human food chain. Metallized helium-filled balloons are unique in that they can interfere with power lines. Finally, this ordinance offers greater sustainability with requirements for pre-packaged condiments only upon request, and reusable foodware in a later phase.

The Massachusetts Sierra Club strongly endorses this comprehensive waste reduction ordinance. This ordinance will also enhance the image of the City of Newton, which has already demonstrated leadership on single-use plastics with its bans on single-use plastic bag, polystyrene foam, and nip bottles. We urge the Council to vote yes on this proposed ordinance.

Respectfully,

Deb Pasternak
Mass. Sierra Club, Chapter Director