

Talking Points in Support of Proposed Ordinances on Single-use Bags and Polystyrene Foam Containers

Plastic bags:

1. Bags are no longer accepted by ecomaine in single-stream recycling
 - consumers have to collect them separately and bring to grocery store collection points in order to recycle
2. Bags are lightweight and easily transportable, easily becoming litter and a nuisance
 - plastic bags are 4th most common item in 2016 International Coastal Cleanup data from Ocean Conservancy
 - plastic bags clog ecomaine's sorting equipment
 - plastic bags end up in storm drains where they cause clogging; municipalities have invested in trucks designed specifically to remove these bags
 - the costs to deal with these externalities are borne by the tax-paying public
3. Bans or fees are more effective than educational campaigns in changing consumer behavior (accorign to Maine NRCM)
 - imposing a fee on all single-use bags (not just plastic) promotes reusable bag use
 - in the proposed Cape Elizabeth ordinance, consumers can still have a bag, they just have to pay for it
4. These kinds of ordinances are increasingly common in Maine and the U.S.:
 - Maine plastic bag bans: York, Freeport, Kennebunk, Saco
 - Maine plastic bag fees: Portland, South Portland, Falmouth, Topsham
 - Chicago plastic bag ban: when they banned plastic bags, they saw increase in use of paper bags and thicker plastic bags that retailers gave away for free but that people didn't reuse; now there is a 7c fee on all plastic and paper single-use bags
 - DC plastic bag fee: plastic bag use has declined by more than 60% since 5c bag fee went into effect
 - CA has a statewide ban on plastic bags with a fee for single-use paper bags

Polystyrene foam:

1. There is no economically and environmentally sound way to recycle expanded polystyrene (EPS)
 - used food containers are not typically accepted for recycling (none of largest 30 cities in U.S. accepts used EPS containers)
 - EPS is a lightweight and high volume material, and with no market for recycled material; it is cost-prohibitive to recycle
2. EPS easily breaks into beads that are extremely light and transportable and difficult to clean up
 - EPS food containers are one of the most common litter items found on beaches globally
3. Polystyrene is composed of styrene and benzene – both have carcinogenic properties
 - styrene is listed as a potential carcinogen by the National Toxicology Program
 - a laboratory study found that oyster reproduction is affected by exposure (via ingestion) to PS microplastics
4. Polystyrene bans are increasingly common in Maine:
 - Freeport (banned in 1990), Portland, South Portland, Topsham, Brunswick