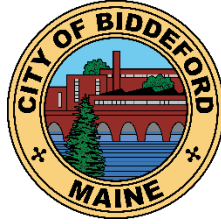

CITY OF BIDDEFORD, MAINE

From: James Bennett, City Manager
City of Biddeford, Maine
205 Main Street
Biddeford, Maine 04005



Phone:
207-284-9313

Email:
james.bennett@biddefordmaine.org

April 18, 2019

Council Approves Single-Use Plastic Bag Ban in Biddeford

BIDDEFORD — The Biddeford City Council has approved an ordinance change that will prohibit Biddeford retailers from providing single-use plastic bags.

The ban on single-use plastic bags applies to all grocery and convenience stores, markets, pharmacies, restaurants, take-out food, temporary and seasonal businesses, and other merchant retailers in the city. The ordinance will go into effect on July 15, 2019 to allow retailers to use their existing inventory of plastic bags. After July 15, retailers who violate the ordinance will be subject to a \$250 fine for the first violation and a \$500 fine for each subsequent violation in a one-year period.

The City of Biddeford approved the ban due to both the environmental impacts of single-use plastic bags and recent recycling contamination issues that the City has been facing.

“Many people think that they should bag their recyclables before putting them in the recycling bin, but plastic bags are actually not accepted in the curbside recycling program,” said Public Works Director Jeff Demers. “The bags interfere with the sorting process at the recycling facility and are the biggest source of recycling contamination in our community.”

The Public Works Department’s educational efforts have cut recycling contamination rates from 40% to 18% since July 2018, but plastic bags remain to be a problem. The Public Works Department is working to reduce the contamination rate to about 8% throughout the coming months. With recycling markets changing internationally, the City may be charged fees if recycling contamination issues continue.

“Plastic bags are convenient, but with the costly issues that they create within our recycling program, and the increasing evidence of environmental damage from plastics in all areas of our environment, it is appropriate and important that we adjust our lives and our habits to not only save tax dollars, but do what is right,” said Mayor Alan Casavant.

Stores may still choose to provide paper bags to customers for free or for a fee. Clean paper bags are accepted in the City’s curbside recycling program. Plastic bags without handles that are used for produce or meat may still be provided at grocery stores, but are prohibited in the City’s blue single-sort recycling bins.

For more information about the plastic bag ordinance, please contact the Public Works Department at 207-282-1579.

###