

Bar Harbor is the latest Maine town to consider plastic shopping bag ban

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Bar Harbor, known for being the home to environmentally focused College of the Atlantic and the gateway community to Acadia National Park, is the latest municipality in Maine to take up the issue of whether to ban the commercial distribution of retail single-use shopping bags.

The possible ban — which follows the adoption last month of [a plastic bag prohibition](#) in the Mount Desert Island town of Southwest Harbor — is geared to addressing growing concern about the amount of plastic pollution in the environment, [especially in the oceans](#). More than a dozen communities statewide have adopted or considered similar restrictions.

The Bar Harbor Town Council voted Tuesday to schedule a public hearing for Jan. 15, 2019, on possible local bans on single-use plastic shopping bags and polystyrene food containers.

Since June 2014, when the Portland City Council [voted to adopt a ban](#) on polystyrene and a per-bag fee on paper and plastic retail shopping bags, roughly 20 municipalities in Maine, most of them along the coast, have adopted similar measures.

Bans or restrictions have been enacted in municipalities ranging from [York](#) to Manchester to Blue Hill, and have been considered or proposed in [Bangor](#), Ellsworth and Waterville, the last of which had to [recount its votes last month](#) to determine that a proposed ban there narrowly had been rejected.

Bar Harbor councilors Paul Paradis and Stephen Coston each said Tuesday that they support reducing the use of plastic shopping bags to help protect the environment, but have reservations about adopting government mandates to achieve the goal.

“I don’t like dictating these things like this through an ordinance,” Paradis said.

The council discussed how such an ordinance would be enforced and whether the ban would apply to the casual re-use of plastic bags that customers might have when making a purchase at a local business or event. Kate Macko, a resident who helped bring the idea to the council, suggested that re-using a plastic bag obtained elsewhere would exempt that practice from the proposed “single-use” prohibition.

Other councilors voiced support for the general idea, provided that it is applied fairly and that retailers are given plenty of advance notice for when the ban would go into effect. Councilor Joe Minutolo acknowledged that progress has been made in reducing plastic bag usage without having a local restriction but said that adopting a ban could help speed things along.

“This situation has gotten out of hand, and sometimes you have to give people a nudge,” Minutolo said. “I believe this is the right thing to do.”