



## **ENVIRONMENTAL LOOKOUT: OUR EARTH, OUR HEALTH - OR CONVENIENCE?**

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Mashpee's Fall Town Meeting is October 18<sup>th</sup>. Article 22 on the Town Warrant - Commercial Single-use Plastic Water Bottle Ban – would prohibit the retail sale of single-use plastic water bottles. Why is plastic such a concern?

Spearheaded by Sustainable Practices Ltd., over the past two years, residents across the Cape have focused on the life cycle impact of plastic on the environment. The discussion – and policy – has broadened from recycling to the actual impacts of plastic on the soil, in our water, and to human health. As a result, plastic bottle bans have been filed and passed by local Town Meetings all over the Cape.

Today, all Cape towns have a Municipal Plastic Bottle Ban in place, eliminating town government purchase of single-use plastic bottled beverages. This means that tax dollars cannot be used to purchase a product that is known to have adverse consequences across its life cycle. The Commercial Single-use Plastic Water Bottle Ban follows this campaign.

Since the fall of 2020, 10 Cape towns have voted to pass the Commercial Single-use Plastic Water Bottle Ban at their respective Town Meeting. The ban eliminates the sale of non-flavored, non-carbonated single-use plastic water bottles of less than a gallon in size. In eliminating this product, the Commercial Single-use Plastic Water Bottle Ban highlights that plastic water bottles are 60 percent of the beverage market; are virtually unregulated compared to municipal water (municipal water is tested routinely, bottled water is not); and that plastic bottles have negative consequences from production to consumption to disposal.

The majority of plastic is petroleum-based, leaving a significant greenhouse gas footprint. If fracking is used to extract the oil, that can also lead to water contamination.

Although plastic can be produced agriculturally, utilizing genetically modified vegetation, other environmental degradation can occur. For instance, when the vegetation is treated with pesticides and herbicides, ground water contamination can result. Besides, why use valuable agricultural land to produce plastic rather than food?

But this is just the beginning. Human health can be severely affected. Both petroleum and plant-based plastics contain synthetic estrogen, which leaches through plastic products with the potential to affect a person's hormonal balance. The chemicals in plastic are also known to

leach into beverages and food and are connected to obesity, endocrine disruption, fertility issues, autoimmune disease, ADHD, and cardiovascular disease.

So plastic is not just a disposal, or recycling, issue. Rather, the product is a human health and environmental issue.

We have lived without plastic, and without having a bottle within reach, much longer than the approximately 40 years plastic has been around. It is time to rethink our connection with convenience—the resources used in production are far greater than the benefit gained. And with plastic, the true cost far exceeds the price. We all pay with our health.

I am asking you to join me at the Mashpee Town Meeting on October 18 to make Mashpee the 11<sup>th</sup> Cape Cod town to vote “yes” on the Commercial Single-use Plastic Water Bottle Ban. We can make a difference, be an example for other communities, and steward our portion of the Earth.

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