

EAC Single-Use Plastic Bag Ordinance

Accompanying Program Guide

Updated 2/12/2024 - reflecting updates to reusable bag collection & distribution, data collection, activities, references and township lists.

Summary

This program guide accompanies a request to reconsider the proposed Single-Use Plastic bag ordinance for Springfield Township. This guide outlines the activities, led by the Springfield Township Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC), to help educate and gain feedback from the public and businesses on the impact of proposed ordinance in the township. We've completed 11 educational activities and have more planned through the approval and implementation of the ordinance.

The scope of this document covers the activities leading up to the introduction of the ordinance, through the introduction, approval and implementation of the ordinance. The reasons for a Single-Use plastic bag ordinance are covered in the accompanying materials which have previously been presented to the Board of Commissioners and community.

Implementation of this ordinance is a recognition that as a community Springfield Township is committed to sustainability and reducing our negative impact on the environment and how this action may be one of the many small steps to addressing climate change.

There are 17 municipalities in our region which have passed single-use plastic bag ban ordinances. Two more have advertised ordinances. This ordinance and program guide align with what other municipalities in our region have implemented.

Equity Statement

We acknowledge that understanding the impact in the implementation of an ordinance can have an impact on minority, poor and other marginalized communities. Throughout the EAC's work on this ordinance we have included a focus on equity and this impact as part of the consideration of this proposed ordinance. Quantifying that impact was not just hard, but effectively impossible to determine.

During the journey to implement this ordinance, the EAC provided an opportunity for Springfield Township to collect data that can serve, however imperfectly, as an indicator of impact on those communities. This can serve not just Springfield Township, but also other communities who are seeking to implement similar ordinances.

We also include in the programming specific engagement and outreach to minority owned businesses.

Impact and Scope

Single-Use plastic bags have a negative environmental impact, contributing to climate change, and are also a blight in our community. Americans use 100 billion single-use plastic bags per year. There is no way to recycle or reuse these bags in any meaningful way which would off-set their environmental impact. The extraction and use of fossil fuels to manufacture these bags cannot be made to be environmentally friendly or sustainably produced.

There are many other single use plastics consumed which should also be reduced. However, the Springfield Township EAC proposes to have a targeted ordinance on single use plastic bags because there are cost-effective, environmentally friendly and sustainable alternatives that exist to replace single use plastic bags in our community.

Program

These programs cover pre-ordinance introduction, during the implementation and post implementation.

Community and Business Outreach and Education

1. The EAC presented to the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners an overview of the problem that single use plastic bags present to the environment and our community. We sought approval to conduct a survey to determine the communities' views on enacting a single use plastic bag ban in the township.
2. The EAC conducted a residential and business survey to understand the community's view on single use plastic bag waste and a proposed ordinance. The results of the survey are summarized below.

As part of the survey, the EAC and Peter Wilson, our commissioner liaison, conducted in person discussions with the businesses in the township explicitly seeking their input and feedback.

These results were presented to the Board of Commissioners and the community in September 2022. This was published and is available on the township website.

3. The EAC is continuing significant education of the community with the following activities. These activities have either occurred or are scheduled for different times as appropriate through the enactment and implementation of an ordinance.
 - March 2022 - EAC initial request on single use survey and initial education.
 - Spring-Summer 2022 - EAC conducts a survey of residents and businesses on single-use plastic bag ordinance.
 - September 2022 - EAC presentation of survey results to the board and public.
 - October 2022 - Board consideration and vote on ordinance.
 - November 2nd 2022 - Presented to the Springfield Township Rotary.
 - June 7th 2023 - Community education session on "Practical Sustainability" covering how residents can make positive sustainable & cost-effective changes in everyday products from trash bags to appliances reducing or eliminating reliance on fossil fuel based products. [Recorded and published](#) by the township.
 - June 27th 2023 - Community education session with PennEnvironment, Cheltenham EAC, and Whitemarsh EAC. [Recorded and posted](#) to the township website.
 - July 3rd 2023 - Presentation and reintroduction of this program and proposed ordinance to the Board of commissioners.
 - Springfield Township High School Sustainability club conducted a survey of students.
 - On going public discussion during all EAC monthly meetings on single use plastics.

- On going publication of information on single use plastics and alternatives via the Township Newsletter and EAC Facebook page.
- Conducted individual EAC in person discussion with ACME and Giant store managers and their respective corporate representatives.
- July-September 2023:
 - Individual EAC in person discussion with minority owned and managed businesses in the township.
 - Engage with Wawa management and corporate on implementation of the ordinance in the township.
 - Engage with businesses beyond the ordinance to discuss alternatives and limiting the use of plastics in straws, utensils and other packaging materials. Making items like straws, utensils and condiments optional upon request for take away.
- Conduct additional education sessions for residents on the ordinance, ways to reduce or eliminate the use of single use bags and other single use plastics.
- Conduct a one-on-one education and feedback session with new commissioners.
- Continued partnership with Springfield Township High School administration and sustainability club on raising education and opportunities to reduce single use plastics in the district.
- Proposed EAC presentation on single-use plastics to Springfield Township High School and Middle School students.
- November 2023 - January 2023 - Provided township businesses with [vendors](#) that can supply plastic bag alternatives. Visiting over 35 local businesses in the township providing information on the ordinance for businesses.
- January 2023 - Presented to the Springfield Rotary about the ordinance, updating them on the progress since we last presented to them, and discussion on single use plastics in general.

These education activities cover why single use bags are a problem, harmful to the environment and our community. Education covers how the community can make changes to reduce or eliminate the use of single use plastics. This includes advocating for residents to reach out to our commissioners, and our elected representatives at the county, state and federal level in support of broader action to eliminate the use of single use plastics.

Establish a reusable bag exchange

The EAC, based on what other townships have done in their programs which lead implementation in our township, discussion at EAC meetings and with board of commissioner members have updated this program from having a physical presence in the township for collection and distribution of reusable bags to being an on-request program.

The EAC will be on point via advertisement via their email address for residents of the township who need reusable bags or would like to donate their extra reusable bags that are in good condition. The EAC will coordinate with residents when contacted to work with them per request to address their needs for reusable bags or donation of reusable bags.

Creation of Signage

Larger businesses have indicated that they will provide their own signage in store (e.g. Acme, Giant, Wawa), the EAC will create electronic signage that will be made available to other businesses that do not want to create their own signage to advertise the change within the establishment.

Support to our State Representatives

Our State Representative and Senator have expressed support for this type of legislation at a state level. They have indicated that passing this legislation at our level will help bolster their efforts to get this adopted at the state level. To that end, the EAC will draft a letter from the township indicating our support of this action at the state level.

Data Collection

The EAC is committed to being data driven where possible to inform the actions we take or in the education that we provide.

Equitable impact data collection

As part of this program, Commissioner Ratsavong proposed an initiative which could help to collect data on the equitable impact of banning single use plastic bags in the community. The EAC supports this as part of the program in support of implementing a single use bag ordinance in the township.

The township would purchase and have available upon request to township residents for free single use plastic bags through the first 12 months of the bag ordinance being in place. These bags would be available via the township administration building during normal business hours for residents to pick up.

This would allow the township to collect data on the number of residents requesting these bags to assess the impact on the community of this bag ban and be able to make adjustments to the ordinance as needed.

Data collection on the impact to minority and marginalized communities is hard to collect and this would be a method to understand that impact within Springfield Township and provide that data to other similar communities looking to implement a similar ordinance.

2/12/2024 Data collection update: The EAC, based on what other townships have done in their programs which lead implementation in our township, discussion at EAC meetings and with board of commissioner members have updated this program. The EAC will be a point of contact via their email address for residents of the township who face hardship and are in need of single-use plastic bags. Residents who need single-use plastic bags can contact the EAC. The EAC will work with residents on a case by case basis to understand their needs and work to provide them with single use plastic bags or an alternative. This will continue for the first year of the program

This data will be provided to the township and board as we collect it to keep them informed of any impact to residents.

Survey – Township Residents and businesses

The EAC conducted a survey from Spring through the Summer of 2022, canvassing not only the residents but also the businesses in the township to help understand the desire of the township to support a ban on single use plastic bags.

The results of this survey were out of 426 residential response to the survey, 97% were familiar or somewhat familiar with the impact of single-use plastic bags on our environment. And most respondents support a ban on single-use plastic bags.

Fully support	279
Somewhat support	64
Fully oppose	59
Somewhat oppose	18
Unsure	9

From the business survey, most respondents supported greater access to reusable bags and a ban by the township on single-use plastic bags.

This data and its associated presentation are provided again with this program.

Survey – Springfield High School

The Springfield High School and its sustainability committee have partnered with the Springfield Township EAC to help educate and engage all members of our community. To that end, the high school sustainability committee has conducted a survey of students in the high school in February of this year. The results of that survey mirror the EAC’s findings in the community.

Out of the 404 responses received from high school students, 58% of the students were fully or mostly in support of a plastic bag ban in the township. %27 were unsure, and %13 were mostly or fully unsupportive of a bag ban.

%46 percent of students responding were familiar or very familiar with the impact of single use plastic bags. %33 were unsure and %20 had little to no familiarity with the impact of single use plastic bags.

In regards to what prevents students from using reusable bags 44% forget to bring them, %13 always use reusable bags, and %16 use them for other purposes.

Single use bag ordinances in surrounding municipalities

To date 15 municipalities have implemented bag bans in our region. Several states, including New Jersey, New York and Delaware have implemented state level plastic bag legislation.

2/14/2024 Updated to reflect additional information for existing townships in this list and new townships that have passed an ordinance since this guide was created.

Municipality	Status	Potential Plastic eliminated (tons)	Policy Type
Ambler Borough	Passed 2022	13.69	ban on plastic bags, ban on polystyrene containers
Cheltenham Township	Passed 2023	75.34	ban on plastic bags, \$0.10 fee on other bags
City of Philadelphia	Passed 2019	3,226.3	ban on plastic bags
City of Pittsburgh	Passed 2022	609.48	ban on plastic bags, \$0.10 fee on other bags
Doylestown Borough	Passed 2022		

Municipality	Status	Potential Plastic eliminated (tons)	Policy Type
Easttown Township	Passed 2022	22.09	ban on plastic bags, \$0.15 fee on other bags
Haverford Township	Passed 2022	101.45	ban on plastic bags, \$0.10 fee on other bags, straws available on request only
Lower Merion	Passed 2023	128	ban on plastic bags, \$0.10 fee on other bags
Media Borough	Passed 2022	11.87	ban on plastic bags, straws available on request
Montgomery Township	Passed 2023	52.03	Goes into effect April 2024, inc. straws and polystyrene. \$0.10 cent bag fee.
Narberth Borough	Passed 2018	9	\$0.10 fee on all bags
Newtown Township	Passed 2023	40.02	Goes into effect April 2024, inc. polystyrene. Straws and utensils for takeout upon request.
Radnor Township	Passed 2022	66.84	ban on plastic bags, \$0.10 fee on other bags
Solebury Township	Passed 2022	17.52	ban on plastic bags, \$0.10 fee on other bags, ban on polystyrene food service containers
Tredyffrin Township	Passed 2022	64.22	ban on plastic bags, \$0.15 fee on other bags, ban on polystyrene foam containers, ban on plastic straws
Upper Merion	Passed 2023	67.62	ban on plastic bags, \$0.15 fee on other bags, ban on polystyrene foam containers, ban on plastic utensils. Plastic straws on request only.
Uwchlan Township	Passed 2022	38.54	ban on plastic bags, \$0.15 fee on other bags, ban on polystyrene foam containers, ban on plastic straws
West Chester Borough	Passed 2019	37.56	ban on thin plastic bags, \$0.10 fee on other bags, ban on plastic straws
West Goshen Township	Passed 2021	46.35	ban on plastic bags, ban on plastic straws
West Norriton Township	Passed 2022	32.59	Ban on plastic bags, \$0.15 fee on other bags
Whitemarsh Township	Passed 2023	39.64	ban on plastic bags, \$0.15 fee on other bags, plastic straws & utensils available on request only.
Lancaster Township	Passed 2023	37.5	Ban on plastic bags
Springfield Township	Passed 2023	41.87	ban on plastic bags, \$0.10 fee on paper bags.
Swathmore Borough	Passed 2023	13.16	ban on plastic bags, \$0.10 fee on other bags. Ban on polystyrene foam food service containers, ban on non-foam polystyrene containers (#6 plastics), plastic straws on request

Municipality	Status	Potential Plastic eliminated (tons)	Policy Type
Upper Moreland Township	Passed 2023	52.54	ban on plastic bags, \$0.10 fee on other bags, ban on polystyrene foam containers. Plastic straws on request only.

Source:

<https://environmentamerica.org/pennsylvania/resources/single-use-plastic-laws-in-pennsylvania/>

Local news coverage of the ordinance

1. Chestnut Hill Local, 9/28/2023 - "[Judicial report, plastic bag ban top Springfield agenda](#)"
2. Chestnut Hill Local, 8/17/2023 - "[Springfield Twp. bans single-use bags, honors police officer](#)"

References on impact and adoption in other communities of bag bans

1. "[Philadelphia's Bag Ban prevent 200 million plastic bags](#)" April 27th 2023
2. EAC Survey Results
3. "[Do plastic bag bans work?](#)" from the NRDC
4. Springfield Township High School sustainability club student survey
5. "[Cheltenham township board of commissioners passes legislation to ban single-use plastic bags](#)"
6. "[Single Use Plastic Laws in Pennsylvania](#)"
7. [Consumer bag legislation summary matrix](#) via Retail Compliance Center.
8. Media Borough [vendor list](#) for plastic bag and straw alternatives.
9. Playbook, "[How retailers can use fewer single-use plastic bags and encourage consumers to bring their own reusable bags](#)".
10. [UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee](#) on plastic pollution.
11. "[Our planet versus plastic bags – a tale of two cities](#)"
12. Springfield Township Board of Commissioners [initial vote on plastic bag ordinance](#) October 2022.
13. [Webinar](#) on plastics and human health.
14. UK [resource for posters](#) on reducing use of plastic and single use plastic.
15. Just-Zero, "[Loopholes, Injustice and the advanced recycling myth](#)"
16. [Penn State Sustainability Institute](#)
17. Plastic Pollution Coalition [Resource Library](#)
18. Township [bag ban ordinance status listing](#)
19. "[The Whole Foods](#)" Plastic Problem
20. "[Montgomery Township OKs plastic bag ban](#)", October 2023.
21. "[Newtown Townships single-use plastic bag ban will begin in April](#)"