

# SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO THE NEW BY-LAWS

The Tri-Town Health Department and the Lee Recycling Committee are helping residents and businesses transition to new by-laws that regulate plastic shopping bags and polystyrene containers. We are developing, posting, and distributing:

- a guide to the by-laws,
- practical ways to meet household needs without plastic shopping bags,
- a list of approved alternatives, and
- frequently asked questions.

We will meet with groups and businesses; provide information through media and local organizations; and hold events for sharing, purchasing, and repairing reusable shopping bags.

By helping the community understand the implications of the by-laws and supporting the transition, we hope to achieve all the benefits we expect with few, if any, problems.

Thank you for playing an active role in this process by using and taking care of your reusable bag.

## Contact Information

For more information about the bylaws, please visit [www.tritownhealth.org](http://www.tritownhealth.org) or the Recycling Committee's section of the Town website ([www.lee.ma.us](http://www.lee.ma.us)).

If you have specific questions or would like to volunteer to help with the transition, please contact:

### Tri-Town Health Department

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### Lee Recycling Committee

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and the

## Lee Greener Gateway Committee\*

**USING YOUR NEW  
REUSABLE  
SHOPPING BAG  
TO MAKE LEE  
A GREENER  
GATEWAY**

## CONGRATULATIONS: YOU'VE ALREADY TAKEN THE FIRST STEP

Your reusable bag will be invaluable as Lee makes the transition to life with less plastic. Under the plastic shopping bag by-law adopted at Town Meeting last May and going into effect in May 2017, you'll be able to use whatever bags/containers you want, but establishments will no longer be able to hand out thin plastic bags.

Town Meeting representatives approved the by-law to help safeguard public health and the environment and to make Lee a Greener Gateway to the Berkshires. It's up to each of us to help achieve the intended benefits. Key to that is using reusable bags and other containers.

You might think getting paper bags when you shop is the best solution. It isn't. Making these bags uses precious resources, they're costly, and they're bulky for businesses to handle and store.

Reusable bags make a world of difference. You can use them hundreds of times. They can be easily cleaned, are safer from a public health perspective, and are environmentally friendly. With care and a little forethought, you'll get many years of safe use from your bag. And you'll help make Lee a Greener Gateway! So, once again, congratulations...and thank you!

## TIPS FOR A SAFE, LONG LIFE FOR YOUR REUSABLE BAG

With the growing restrictions on the use of thin-film plastic shopping bags and the increased use of reusable bags, various entities have published recommendations for the safe use of these bags. The following tips include excerpts from the US Department of Health and Human Services and Health Canada materials:

- *Do not use reusable grocery bags for other purposes. Don't carry items such as baby bottles, toys, gym clothes, and other items in the same reusable bags that you take to the grocery store.*
- *Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood separated from other foods with bags, wraps, etc. to prevent juices from leaking out into the bags and contacting other food. Don't reuse these disposable bags/wraps.*
- *If you have multiple reusable bags, use separate ones for meats, fresh fruits and vegetables, and ready-to-eat foods.*

- *Wash all fresh produce in soapy water and thoroughly rinse before eating or cooking.*
- *Machine- or hand-wash your reusable bags frequently – following any provided washing instructions for best results, especially after using them to carry fresh produce, meat, poultry, and seafood or if juices from food have leaked.*
- *Make sure the bags are thoroughly dry before storing them.*
- *Store reusable bags in a cool, dry place. If you keep bags in your car, be sure they are clean and dry, especially during hot weather.*
- *Avoid carrying in the bags unwrapped sharp objects that could puncture or rip them.*
- *The bags should be readily able to hold up to 25 pounds of goods. Avoid overloading them.*
- *Periodically check your bags for tears, weakened stitching, etc. and repair them.*

Following these simple tips should ensure your reusable bags safely meet your needs for years to come.