



Report of the Zero Waste Committee to 2023 Town Meeting

Introduction

Zero Waste Arlington's mission is to foster greater participation in all forms of waste reduction to improve health and restore the environment.

In 2022-2023 Zero Waste Arlington (ZWA) has continued its work with a dedicated committee and set of volunteers. Here is a summary of our work since the last report to Town Meeting in 2022.

1. **Single-Use Plastic Water Bottle Ban:** Passage of the Single-Use Plastic Water Bottle Ban in May 2022.
2. **Plastics Reduction Subcommittee:** Formed to focus on reducing single use plastics in Arlington.
 - a. Works collaboratively with the town to support the repair, installation, and promotion of public water refill stations in town, and with restaurants to provide free tap water, as part of the [Arlington On Tap](#) campaign.
 - b. In April launched the "[No Plastic Please!](#)" campaign, a partnership with local restaurants to eliminate excess single-use restaurant waste.
3. **Legislative Subcommittee:** Keeps track of bills in the MA state legislature and updates the committee on their status. This subcommittee has brought the [Producer Responsibility Resolution](#) to the 2023 Town Meeting.
4. **Outreach & Education:** The core work of ZWA - we have continued to make great strides with our
 - a. New website zerowastearlington.org (launched in July 2022) which is updated on a regular basis with blog posts and updates on events.
 - b. [Earth to Arlington Webinar Series](#) - two webinars were hosted on waste bans and on the food waste problem.
 - c. [Facebook Page](#) and Google group that gets regular posts and updates
 - d. Tabling and sponsorships at community events like Town Day, EcoFest, Resources and Connections Fair, and the Heights June Fest.

Join the efforts of Zero Waste Arlington!

We meet virtually at 7:00 PM the 4th Thursday of every month.

Check out our website - zerowastearlington.org

Follow us on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/zerowastearlington/>

Email zerowastearlington@gmail.com to be added to the ZWA Google Group

Single Use Plastic Water Bottle Ban

At the Spring 2022 Town Meeting, ZWA sponsored a warrant article banning the sale of plain, non-carbonated water in plastic bottles sized one liter or smaller. Our arguments were that

- These bottles have a very low recycling rate and end up as trash or litter
- They are made from fossil fuels and require the use of more fossil fuels to transport to Arlington
- They are harmful to the environment when littered
- Tap water can be made available at refill stations, by restaurants, and filled in reusable bottles by Arlington residents.

The bylaw applies to any business in Arlington that sells bottled water, as well as the sale of bottled water in Town buildings and schools.



Gone are the stacks of plastic water bottles now you see water sold in aluminum cans

As a result of the ban, you will notice that the large retailers, convenience stores, and restaurants have cleared their shelves of the large packages of single use plastic water bottles. Some stores are selling water in aluminum cans instead of plastic bottles. That's good news for reducing single-use plastic waste. However, we are noticing the introduction of water sold in boxed packaging and marketed as eco-friendly. This is misleading and causing confusion. This packaging is made of multiple materials and is not recyclable.



Find more about the ban on our website including FAQs and blog posts on this topic.

Plastics Reductions Subcommittee



[Arlington On Tap](#) - In response to the single use plastic water bottle ban we started the Arlington On Tap campaign to make us all aware of the high quality of our tap water. ZWA Committee Members have been working closely with town officials advocating, planning, and implementing water filling stations around town, with the first one recently installed at the renovated Hurd field.



Our website has an interactive [map](#) with locations of all the indoor and outdoor water filling stations in Arlington.



[No Plastic, Please!](#) Several years in the making, we finally launched our 'No Plastic, Please!' campaign that changes the default restaurant model to one where consumers have to ask for single-use accessories. The results? Reduce unnecessary waste and save restaurants money.

Not operational yet but we now have a water filling station at the newly renovated Hurd Field.

So far, six local restaurants have joined the program: [Roasted Granola](#), [Szechuan's Dumpling](#), [The Heights Pub](#), [Punjab](#), [Noodle Market](#), and [Za](#).

When dining at participating restaurants customers can be assured that they will not receive single-use extras unless they specifically ask for them. Qualified restaurants commit to the following:

- For Dining In: provide reusable plates, utensils, and drinkware; provide straws, single-use condiments packets only by customer request.
- For Takeout or Delivery: only add single-use items (utensils, straws, napkins, condiment packets, chopsticks) if specifically requested.

Look for the 'No Plastic, Please!' window sticker and show your support. Tell your favorite eatery that reducing waste matters and encourage them to participate in the "No Plastic, Please!" campaign.

Legislative Subcommittee

Our legislative subcommittee closely tracks all waste and recycling related legislation at the State House, keeps the committee abreast on the status of the bills, and will mobilize support for particular issues agreed upon by the full Committee, as appropriate. This work involves outreach to legislators that represent Arlington, but also those from other districts that sit on key committees or are part of the Zero Waste Caucus. Our subcommittee also liaises with waste-focused groups in other municipalities, state agencies, and beyond.

We have included in the Spring 2023 Town Meeting a resolution to support legislation promoting Producer Responsibility, an environmental strategy which shifts responsibility for the collection, transportation and end use disposal/recycling of products away from local municipalities and onto the product's manufacturers.

Some Producer Responsibility strategies include: eliminating excess packaging; building modular and repairable products; offering items in bulk; and more.

We hope Town Meeting will support this resolution (Article 64) which is a concerted effort by several municipalities to work towards action on Producer Responsibility. When we signal the position of our Town through resolutions like this, we strengthen our position in discussions with elected officials.

Outreach & Education

Website: In July 2022 we launched our website zerowastearlington.org. The committee hired a professional web designer to support us in the effort but all content and organization was written and planned by the committee members. The website is regularly updated with updates on events and blog posts. Google analytics tracks usage and we have seen **2,300 users** browse through the pages of the site since launch.

Social Media: We actively manage the The [ZWA Facebook page](#), posting relevant content at regular intervals. As of April 2023 we have 889 followers, up from 773 followers 12 months ago. Our primary means of communicating more formal announcements with the ZWA community is through our Google group, which currently has nearly 300 participants.

Webinar Series: We hosted 2 well-attended webinars this year as part of our series "[Earth to Arlington: Let's Talk Trash.](#)" The November 2022 webinar focused on the Waste Bans - a live Q&A. In April 2023 we hosted a panel discussing the Food Waste Problem. The panel with Elise Springuel from [Food Link](#), Justin Sandler of [Black Earth Compost](#), and John Fischer from the [Mass. Department of Environmental Protection](#) discussed energy used to produce, transport, and rescue food; the scope of the challenge of household and business waste; and what policies the Commonwealth is implementing.

Solid Waste Statistics

In CY 2022 Arlington diverted **371,765 lbs** of textile through the Bay State Textile recycling program earning Arlington schools **\$18,588**. Additionally Arlington's contractor, Republic Services, hauled **11,302 tons** of municipal solid waste (MSW) to the Wheelabrator incineration plant in North Andover and **4,717 tons** of recyclable items from our blue bins/barrels/carts to its Greenworks material recovery facility (MRF) in Peabody for sorting, baling, and sale.

The monthly Reuse & Recycling Center (R&RC) continues to be popular, bringing in hard to recycle, less incineration-friendly items such as large/bulky rigid plastic, Styrofoam, electronics, and scrap metal. The R&RC collects books, and is continuing the successful Swap Shed launched in 2021. ***Everyone should utilize the Reuse & Recycling Center to help Arlington increase its diversion rate!***