

Board of Selectmen Recommendation:     Approve 4-0-0  
Finance Committee Recommendation:     Approve 6-0-0

**Article 18 – General Bylaw Amendment/New – Balloons**

~~Strikethrough~~ indicates language proposed for deletion  
Underline indicates language proposed for inclusion  
***Bold Italicized Words*** are defined in the existing Bylaw

To see if the Town will vote to amend the General Bylaws of the Town as follows:

**§208-26 Prohibition on Sale and Use of Balloons.**

- A. The purpose of this Bylaw is to address public concerns regarding the environmental hazards to wildlife and marine life in the Town of Chatham posed by the release and improper disposal of balloons.
- B. Effective September 15, 2018 no person shall sell, or distribute to the public any type of balloon (including, but not limited to plastic, latex, rubber or Mylar balloons) inflated with any type of lighter-than-air gas (including, and not limited to, helium gas). For purposes of this Bylaw, a “lighter-than-air-gas” refers to a gas that is buoyant in air because it has an average density lower than that of air.
- C. No person shall throw, deposit, discard, or otherwise discharge inflated or uninflated balloons into any street, alley, waterway, park, beach, or other public place in the Town of Chatham.
- D. Further, no person shall knowingly release or cause to be released into the air any balloon(s) inflated with any lighter than air gas (including, and not limited to, helium gas).
  - a. Launching or operation of lighter-than-air aircraft, or the launching of balloons inflated with lighter than air gas by government agencies or scientific organizations is allowed.
- E. Violations of this Bylaw shall be subject to noncriminal disposition pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 1, § 1-7 of these Bylaws.
- F. Any Police Officer of the Town of Chatham shall be an enforcing authority for purposes of this Bylaw.

G. Notwithstanding the general penalties set forth under Chapter 1, § 1-7 of these Bylaws, the specific penalties for violations of this Bylaw shall be as follows:

1. First offense: written warning.
2. Second offense: \$25.
3. Third offense: \$100.

Or take any other action relative thereto.

(Board of Selectmen)

**Motion:** By Shareen Davis, Clerk, Board of Selectmen  
I move that the Town vote to amend its General Bylaw as printed in the Warrant for Article 18.

**Speaker:** Robert A. Duncanson, Ph.D., Director of Natural Resources

**Explanation:** *The release of balloons filled with lighter-than-air gas (i.e. helium), either intentionally or accidentally, is increasingly recognized as harmful to the environment on multiple levels. When balloons are let go they are carried on the wind until they deflate or burst falling to earth as plastic/string debris. Balloon debris is found during beach clean-ups in increasing amounts throughout the world. Mylar balloons have also been implicated in power outages when they become entangled in power lines.*

*In addition to the “trash” aspect, deflated balloons and their strings are a significant threat to wildlife. In the ocean environment in particular deflated balloons are mistaken as food by many marine creatures, due to a resemblance to a common food jellyfish. However, once ingested, a balloon can block the digestive tract causing death by starvation, a common occurrence in sea turtles. Even if the digestive tract is not blocked the balloon has no nutritional value so death may occur through malnutrition. There are also multiple examples of sea and terrestrial birds becoming tangled in the string or ribbon from released balloons resulting in death, either through starvation or entanglement.*

*This bylaw would not prevent the release of weather balloons or launching of lighter-than-air aircraft such as blimps, dirigibles, etc.*

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