



## Town should look at banning Styrofoam

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In 2019, the Town of Amherst may be faced with an unenviable choice brought on by decisions made by politicians more than 6,000 miles away. When the Chinese government decided to ban the import of plastic wastes, it sent recycling programs throughout the world into chaos.

With the largest market for the used plastic containers taken out of the market, it has quickly turned a process that generally paid for itself into an unanticipated cost for the town.

As noted by the Amherst Recycling and Waste Committee, this cost is worse than anyone anticipated and continues to climb.

Will this force the town to abandon recycling efforts? I hope it doesn't come to this, but it may happen if the handling costs of recycling increase to a rate equal to or higher than the disposal rate of regular garbage. There are things that can be done, however, to cut the costs of recycling. As an example, the town may cut the number of collection days down to every other week.

Town residents can help out as well. Every January, Modern Recycling sends a list of acceptable and unacceptable items for recycling. Any unacceptable item has the potential to turn recycled trash into garbage. Also, plastic bags should not go in the recycling tote. Take them to the stores to be recycled.

With the focus on recycling and waste costs, this may be the time for the Town Board to join other communities in the U.S. and consider banning the

one unrecyclable plastic, extruded polystyrene (Styrofoam), in wide use for food and beverage containers.

After its single use, Styrofoam remains in landfills for hundreds of years. With a variety of alternative packaging available, a municipal ban on Styrofoam would be a symbolic recognition that the Town of Amherst remains committed to protecting the environment.

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