

Westford board votes to ban cigarette sales to those younger than 21

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WESTFORD -- Starting June 1, only those 21 and older will be able to purchase a cigarette or electronic cigarette in town.

The Board of Health voted unanimously Monday to implement new tobacco regulations, which includes restricting the sale of traditional as well as e-cigarettes. According to state law, tobacco may only be sold to those older than 18; there's no age limit regarding the sale of "e-cigs," which works by converting a solution with flavoring, solvents and often, nicotine, into vapors which can be inhaled, though most stores impose their own limit at age 18.

The board began discussing approving these new regulations earlier this year. Chairman Zac Cataldo said the group was looking to bring the town on trend with several other places that restrict tobacco sales. He pointed to CVS recently eliminating products from their shelves. Westford is now one of about a dozen communities in Massachusetts adopting similar bylaws. Other communities which have taken a similar step include Dedham, Hudson, Needham and Scituate.

Sandy Collins, director of the town's health-care services, previously said this is necessary to keep younger residents safe.

"The board felt strongly that when presented with growing research and evidence that e-cigarettes are a gateway drug, they voted unanimously," Collins said. "Eighty percent of adult smokers began smoking daily before 20 years of age, and 90 percent of persons who purchased cigarettes for distribution to minors are under 21."

These new regulations are a concern for some convenience-store owners in town who say the ban will hurt their business.

Joel Farber, owner of Nab's One Stop Shop, along with his son, Matt Farber, who works as manager, openly opposed the new regulations in the past few weeks.

SmokeEnds electronic cigarettes were on display at Nab's One Stop Shop in Westford recently. SUN File photo/Ashley Green

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They said the loss of sales to those between 18 and 21 will impact their business.

"We just feel it should come from the state or the federal government, not from the town," Matt Farber told The Sun previously.

"We feel it's just going to send customers who would normally come to us to (go to) our neighboring towns, like Chelmsford."

The town's new policy reads that stores may no longer hold "tastings" of e-cigarettes or sell blunt wrap, or two or more cigars for less than \$5 as well.

The Farbers held what was likely their final tasting April 5, an event the family said they used to look forward to



because they believe exposing people to e-cigarettes helps them learn about alternatives to smoking.

Experts say there is still very little known about e-cigarettes at this time and their potentially harmful effects.

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