

Beginning March 1, tobacco buyers must be 21 in Lawrence - Eagle-Tribune: News

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Lawrence change kicks in March 1

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LAWRENCE — As of March 1, no one under 21 will be allowed to buy cigarettes, cigars or other tobacco products in Lawrence.

The Board of Health voted unanimously Tuesday night to adopt the new regulation, which includes a requirement that businesses selling tobacco products must post signs advising customers on how to enroll in a smoking cessation program. Also, stores will no longer be allowed to sell single cigars unless they are priced at \$2.50 or more. Otherwise, they must be sold in packs of at least four.

The board delayed acting on a proposal that would ban electronic hookahs from bars, nightclubs and restaurants. Chairman Dr. Joel Gorn said the board needs to hear more scientific evidence on the effects of hookah smoking before acting on it.

Mayor Daniel Rivera noted after the hearing that the Board of Health has jurisdiction over health-related issues. While he agrees with discouraging young people from smoking, the challenge the city faces is "whether we can enforce it," he said.

"We need to have a discussion about enforcement," the mayor said.

The majority of the roughly 75 people who attended the hearing at the former School Department headquarters were against the proposed hookah ban. Many convenience store and bar owners urged the board to reject the prohibition, saying it will decrease their sales and force them to lay off employees.

Their customers like hookah and if they can't enjoy it in Lawrence they will go elsewhere, they said. Pituka Pren distributed a pamphlet that warned outlawing electronic hookah will cause a "large revenue loss for our businesses and the city of Lawrence."

"The customers want hookah," said Felipe Montas, a local bar owner.

"We're a poor city," Joseph D'Amico said. "How many stores are going to go out of business (if the tobacco regulations go into effect)?"

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