

Waltham raises tobacco-buying age

- **The Waltham Board of Health has raised the legal age at which individuals can purchase tobacco products.**

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WALTHAM

This week, the News Tribune details the recent Waltham Board of Health decision that raises the tobacco-buying age. The News Tribune spoke to the city's health director and other organizations that may be impacted by the change.

The Waltham Board of Health has raised the legal age at which individuals can purchase tobacco products.

The board voted to raise the age to 21 during its November meeting, according to Health Director John Zuppe. Zuppe said the board raised the age citing overall health concerns with smoking. However, the board is targeting youth who are more likely to become addicted to smoking cigarettes during their teenage years, he said.

Before the vote, Waltham followed state law, which prohibited anybody under 18 from purchasing tobacco products, Zuppe said. Zuppe said the board also wanted to follow other Massachusetts communities that had made similar rule changes. For example, in 2013, Newton raised its tobacco sales age to 21.

Zuppe said the board plans to notify merchants in writing soon.

The Waltham Partnership for Youth, which conducts a youth risk behavior survey that examines youth smoking rates in Waltham, lauded the decision. Executive Director Beth Toolan said the move would help reduce teen smoking rates.

"I think it was a very wise move," Toolan said. "[It] sends a strong message about the community's support of prevention efforts."

In 2012, 20 percent of Waltham children surveyed said they had used tobacco products in the last 30 days, higher than the state average of 14 percent. Waltham's youth tobacco product use rates climbed steadily from 12 percent in 2004 to 21 percent in 2010 before the 1 percent drop

| in 2012.

| *As for the impact the move would have on businesses, Waltham West Suburban Chamber of Commerce Executive Director John Peacock said that remains unclear.*

| *"I'm not too sure how it effects the commercial people in town," Peacock said.*

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