Regulation Passes—Minimum Age To Buy Tobacco Will Be 21

The Falmouth Board of Health has passed a regulation raising the minimum age to purchase tobacco and nicotine delivery products from 18 to 21 in the town of Falmouth.

The decision came Monday, March 7, two weeks after a lengthy public hearing where local business owners that sold such products opposed the regulation due to business concerns.

“We need to draw a line and move this along,” said Jared V. Goldstone, chairman of the board of health. “This is a significant public health issue in the United States and other countries. Restriction on cigarette smoking saves money and saves lives.”

At Monday's meeting, board member John B. Waterbury introduced an amendment to make the regulation take effect 45 days after notification in The Falmouth Enterprise to give store owners more time to adapt, such as for posting signs and training staff.

The board passed this amendment unanimously and expects the regulation to be published sometime in the next two weeks.

Dr. Goldstone addressed comments discussed by business owners at the February 22 hearing. Store owners were concerned about unfair competition from businesses in the neighboring towns of Mashpee, Sandwich and Bourne, where the age to buy tobacco products is 18.

Dr. Goldstone said that he contacted health agents in those towns and learned that Mashpee and Bourne have plans to discuss the possibility of raising the age limit at their next meetings this month. Mashpee’s board is to meet next week.

In the past, Bourne had declined to pass such a regulation, but given recent sting operations where violations were issued for selling tobacco products to minors, the town may revisit the topic at its meeting next week Dr. Goldstone said.

He added that Sandwich, however, is not likely to take up such a regulation any time soon.

Dr. Goldstone said that he would call the health agents from each town to inform them of the decision and that he or another Falmouth board member would plan to attend the meetings in the other towns and encourage these towns to pass similar regulations.

“I will let them know what we have done here,” Dr. Goldstone said.

Dr. Goldstone added that other towns are adopting this type of regulation, such as in Boston, and that there is a state bill in review to raise the minimum age of sale for tobacco and nicotine delivery devices statewide.