



Chatham County, NC

Legislation Text

File #: 19-3260, **Version:** 1

Presentation on Proposed Tobacco Free Ordinance

Action Requested: Presentation on Proposed Tobacco Free Ordinance

- **Introduction & Background:** This is a presentation for consideration of the adoption a tobacco-free ordinance. Chatham County's current administrative tobacco-free policy was approved by the county manager in July, 2015 and went into effect on March 1, 2016. This policy expanded the former policy to include electronic cigarettes and other vapor products and the standard tobacco products definitions from the state. Instead of the former rule that prohibited tobacco use within 50 feet of a building, this policy is a comprehensive tobacco policy where the use of all tobacco products is prohibited on all county grounds (owned, leased, maintained or otherwise occupied), including buildings, parks, and vehicles. The Chatham County Board of Health sent a letter to the Board of County Commissioners this past April asking the Commissioners to consider adopting a tobacco ordinance in order to permanently institutionalize Chatham County's tobacco-free grounds.
- **Discussion & Analysis:** Chatham County's current administrative tobacco-free policy has been in effect for over three years. It has been a very well-received policy among Chatham County's Human Resources Department and among most employees and visitors. Chatham County's tobacco-free grounds were implemented first as a policy with the intention to transition the policy into an ordinance. Policies are easily modifiable and adaptable and it gave us the opportunity to resolve any problems or concerns that we encountered. Now we are ready to move forward and solidify what is working into a formal ordinance. Having a tobacco-free ordinance sets a positive example for residents, other counties, and local municipalities to encourage them to develop their own policies. A tobacco-free ordinance continues to help to protect visitors and employees from secondhand smoke, complements tobacco cessation programs, supports those who have quit or want to quit, and discourages youth from starting to use tobacco. The proposed tobacco-free ordinance mimics the majority of the language that is in the current administrative tobacco-free policy. An ordinance does include language that states that a person not in compliance can be issued an infraction punishable by a fine of not more than fifty dollars. Based on other county's experiences with ordinances, as well as our own experience with our current policy, we do not anticipate that this would be an issue of concern for Chatham County. We do not believe that there would be any changes in county operations or the public's experience if this ordinance is adopted.
- **How does this relate to the Comprehensive Plan:** A tobacco-free ordinance directly relates to Objective 10: Foster a healthy community. Under Recommendation 1: HL Policy 1 Adopt a Health in All Policies (HiAP) Approach, Strategy 1.1: Develop and promote cross-sector relationships, institutionalizing and supporting tobacco-free grounds and parks policies is listed as an action item to support this strategy. In addition, coordinated funding and partnerships in tobacco

prevention and control is highlighted under HL Policy 2 Review and adapt strategies based on evolving health needs, Strategy 2.1 Adapt programs, policies, and projects to address emerging issues. A tobacco-free ordinance would also positively influence several other areas of the Comprehensive Plan, including supporting Recommendation 7 to improve park, recreation, and open space systems for better health. Institutionalizing the prohibition of the use of tobacco products in these areas will both protect and promote better health. Adopting a tobacco-free ordinance demonstrates Chatham County's commitment to implementing the recommendations and action items of the Comprehensive Plan and fostering a health community for all in Chatham.

Budgetary Impact: There is no budgetary impact of this ordinance. Tobacco-free signs were purchased by the Chatham County Public Health Department and installed in 2016 before the administrative policy went into effect. Tobacco-free signs have been located at all county owned, maintained, and leased properties since the policy went into effect. There are no anticipated costs associated with a tobacco-free ordinance.

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