



Redlands City Council to consider regulations on e-cigarettes

By Sandra Emerson , Redlands Daily Facts

REDLANDS >> The City Council has started to talk about regulating the sale and use of electronic cigarettes.

The council this week introduced the possibility of amending the city's municipal code to not only regulate smoking, but also the sale and use of hookahs and e-cigarettes.

The Redlands Chamber of Commerce sent the council a letter on Monday asking they postpone their decision until they can weigh in.

"We're talking about regulating a business — whether I agree with the business or not — so I think we should be able to at least go to the Chamber of Commerce and ask for their expertise since they're very good at what they do," said Councilman Paul Barich.

E-cigarettes are battery operated devices, which look like conventional cigarettes, that contain cartridges filled with nicotine, flavoring and chemicals. They turn the nicotine and other chemicals into a water vapor, rather than smoke.

Proponents of e-cigarettes view the devices as a way to help people quit smoking traditional cigarettes and become tobacco-free.

Opponents view the inhaling of the vapor as a potential health risk.

A hookah is a device used to smoke flavored tobacco called shisha.

The use of e-cigarettes are not regulated under the city's existing municipal code.

The city's municipal code regulates where people can and cannot smoke traditional cigarettes and cigars. Hookah bars and lounges are required to comply with the city's regulations.

"The chamber would like an opportunity to review the options and make recommendations to assist the council in determining the fate of these kinds of businesses finding a home in Redlands," wrote Geoff Bonney, president of the Redlands Chamber of Commerce, in his letter to the city.

Bonney said that not only are vape bars and hookah bars already present in the city's business fabric, but others are interested in locating in Redlands.

As the e-cigarette industry has grown in recent years, with e-cigarette stores, or vape shops, and vape lounges opening throughout the state, cities and counties have been extending bans on cigarettes to include e-cigarettes.

San Bernardino and Riverside Counties have banned the use of e-cigarettes in county facilities.

Earlier this month, the Pomona City Council approved an ordinance banning the use of smoking, including e-cigarettes, in public parks and city facilities.

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In January, the La Verne City Council placed a 45-day moratorium on the establishment or expansion of tobacco-related businesses, including e-cigarettes, vapor bars and hookah lounges.

The only state law related to e-cigarettes prohibits their sale to minors, but state legislation introduced earlier this year by state Sen. Mark Leno, would ban the use of e-cigarettes from the same places traditional cigarettes are banned.

The California Department of Public Health released a report in January urging legislators to regulate e-cigarettes like tobacco products. The report found an increase in e-cigarette use among minors over the use of traditional cigarettes.

Redlands Mayor Paul Foster said he brought the topic up for discussion after two men announced their intention of opening a hookah lounge in downtown at a past council meeting.

The Redlands City Council aims to continue their discussion on the possible regulations during the April 7 meeting.

“I think in a nutshell for me this issue is about whether or not we want to see more of these businesses in town — whether we want a hookah bar or lounge in town,” Foster said. “That’s a part of the discussion that we need to have. That’s part of the regulatory issue associated with it and I think that should be part of what this council discusses on the 7th.”

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration in April 2012⁴, proposed new rules that would extend their tobacco authority to include e-cigarettes, as well as other unregulated products including cigars, pipe tobacco, nicotine gels, waterpipe tobacco and dissolvable products. It would also prohibit the sale of e-cigarettes to minors.