

City of St. Helens

CITY COUNCIL

Public Forum Minutes

January 21, 2015

Members Present: Randy Peterson, Mayor
Doug Morten, Council President
Keith Locke, Councilor
Susan Conn, Councilor

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director
Terry Moss, Police Chief
Sue Nelson, Interim Public Works Co-Director
Lisa Scholl, Administrative Assistant

Others:	Linda Oviatt	Karen VonSlyke	R. VonSlyke
	Petra McCall	Shannon Fitzgibbons	Dennis Sullivan
	Howard Blumenthal	Mike Allehoff	B. Crouser
	J. Deets	Ashley Baggett	Sharon Darroux
	Sherrie Ford	Kristie P.	Nedra Lambert
	Donna Stevens	Joe Corsiglia	Debi Corsiglia
	Jeff Kroll	Tricia Stockwell	Danette Russell
	Jeremy Russell		



Public Forum

Smoke-Free Community

Ashley Baggett, Tobacco Prevention Coordinator for Public Health Foundation of Columbia County, reviewed her PowerPoint presentation. A copy is included in the archived meeting packet.

Mayor Peterson spoke of the photo that showed placement of candy next to electronic (e) cigarette flavorings. Were local businesses surveyed? Ashley confirmed that the prices and locations in the slides were all generated from local businesses.

Council President Morten asked if cannabis is considered a tobacco product? Ashley said it is not. She thinks that cannabis will soon be used similar to e-cigarettes. Chief Moss agreed. Public marijuana consumption in Oregon will not be allowed. What Ashley is talking about is allowed to be used in public. E-marijuana will not look or smell any different than e-cigarettes, making it difficult to enforce. Moss agrees that the flavored oils for e-cigarettes are placed right next to the candy in stores.

Public Comment

◆ Linda Oviatt. She asked for clarification on the 10 foot law.

Ashley responded that the Clean Air Act is complaint driven. She explained the process. The adjacent business is responsible for helping enforce the 10 foot law.

Linda asked who will enforce no smoking in parks. Chief Moss said we will need to be a

community who enforces ourselves. Mayor Peterson added that we have not discussed the enforcement process if a law is passed for no smoking in parks.

◆Bobbie Crousser. She smoked for 32 years and quit three years ago. There was nothing that would stop her from smoking before she was ready. She read a letter into the record. The letter was written before she heard the presentation from Ashley. Bobbie is opposed to the government telling people they cannot smoke on the sidewalks and streets that they helped purchase and maintain. Smoking in the United States is a legal and personal choice for those over 18 years old. It is not the role of City Hall to dictate their personal choice to citizens and ignore over 20% of their constituents. She works with the public every day and has spoken to many people about the proposal. Not one person has been in favor a smoke-free ordinance. Does this mean we will prohibit the selling of tobacco products? That would be devastating to the merchants. She does not foresee an increase in tourism for becoming a smoke-free community. This is a bad and unenforceable idea.

◆Karen VonSlyke. The Spotlight made mention that some cities have become completely smoke-free. If that's the intention, how much will the City lose in taxes from tobacco sales?

Ashley said that is not her intention. She is here to give information and support a healthy environment. Forty-one percent of tobacco users want to quit.

Mayor Peterson approximates the City receives about \$80,000 per year from alcohol and tobacco tax.

◆Kristine Lambert. She appreciates the opportunity to speak at a public forum. This is about prohibition and discrimination. This all started with bar and tavern owners when a government entity forced them to make a change. She reviewed situations similar to this that have not worked; such as, prohibition on alcohol, abortion, religion, obesity, etc. This is a control issue. This will increase the BMI. This is a choice that people should make. People are fighting wars to protect our freedoms. If you outlaw something, kids are going to try it. She attended the last Planning Commission meeting. You cannot see the mountains in the summer. That air is not caused by smoking. It's from car emissions and factories along the river. If you get away with this, it will blow up in your face. More non-smokers are getting lung cancer over smokers. It's not from smoking. It's the environment. This is an extremely controversial topic. It needs to be put to a vote of the citizens.

◆Dennis Sullivan. When he first read the article he thought he was in Multnomah County. He moved out here for a reason. This is taking it too far. Where does it end? He does not smoke but these people have every right to smoke if they want. We need to appreciate those people fighting for our freedoms. We all want clean air and rivers. If you're in a city park and sitting at a picnic table and someone is smoking a ways from you, will you be harmed by the cigarette smoke in the open air?

Ashley said it will harm her if it comes her way. She was a Summer Labor worker for the Parks Department and picked up butts around the ball field and playgrounds. Those are the areas with our most vulnerable population who cannot speak or vote for themselves. It's important that we take care of them as adults.

Dennis believes most responsible cigarette smokers pick up their cigarette butts. He asked how many people smoke and shoot meth in Columbia County? Ashley does not have that data on hand. Dennis said that taking care of the meth problem is more important than the honest smokers.

♦Norma Stevens. The power of the government is given to them by the people. The role of the government is to protect their liberties and not take them away. The power of the people has been taken away on so many levels. No one has a right to tell someone what they can and cannot do. She suggests they drop the idea of a smoking ban. You are infringing upon our rights.

♦Caroline Miller. She is a non-smoker. Obviously, the City Council is considering an ordinance. What can we do to persuade you not to do this?

Mayor Peterson said they are not considering a new ordinance. This is only a public forum to have a discussion about the topic. They will notify the public if they move forward with an ordinance.

Ashley added that her presentation was to provide data about creating a healthy community. There has been no discussion of how it would be done. She suggests the next steps would be to form a committee if they choose to move forward. Mayor Peterson added that this is the first time he has heard the presentation as well.

♦Howard Blumenthal. You can hardly walk down the street without finding a cigarette butt. He is concerned during the summer about butts being thrown into the dry grass. He would like to see rules implemented to protect the parks. Second hand smoke is a problem. There is now even claims of third hand smoke by carrying it on your clothes.

Norma added that it comes down to personal responsibility. We need to educate people.

♦Jenny Dimsho. She worked on the Parks Master Plan last year. Tobacco use in parks contradicts the basic philosophy of recreation departments; which is promoting healthy outdoor living, environmental awareness, fitness and recreation activities. Regarding the personal choice aspect, the environment you're in affects your choice. The goal would be to create an environment that makes the healthy choice the easier choice.

♦Mike Allehof. The same people who are throwing cigarette butts are probably the ones throwing garbage as well. He didn't see anything on the Smoke-Free Oregon website about smoking marijuana.

Ashley said Smoke-Free Oregon is about tobacco use. You will not be allowed to smoke marijuana in public.

♦John. He owns several tobacco shops and owns a home in Columbia County. He appreciates Ashley's presentation. Smokers have to take personal responsibility. There are state laws that prohibit youth from touching tobacco products. He doesn't think any of us are trying to encourage others to smoke. Youth smoking has decreased. We should encourage stores not to place tobacco products near candy. Tobacco shop owners don't encourage youth to buy these products. We need to spend our energy encouraging kids not to smoke.

Ashley explained that education alone does not reduce tobacco use. We are seeing an increase in vaping and e-liquids.

John confirmed there is a ban on smoking marijuana in public. Public Health needs to focus on the youth.

♦Franklin. He is only one of two people in Oregon who has had a successful anti-tobacco case in the local civil courts. He won the case against his landlord. Several months ago, there was an incident at Safeway where a young lady released some form of non-lethal gas. It made people sick. She was sent to jail. A couple years before that a person living in his neighborhood released noxious gas to stop the people living above him. He also went to jail. Same thing has been proven by the CDC with second hand smoke. Why am I able to smoke and murder everyone here but if I do it with a gun or gas then I'm going to prison? Cigarette smoke is a lethal toxic gas. Each one of us has a right to breath and live. A smoker has a right to smoke but if they're right takes away my ability to live and not be murdered by their smoke, then they are infringing upon my rights. This country is about protecting everyone's rights to the extent that the right does not deprive the next individual from their right. There's no reason we can't all live together. It's the government's responsibility to step in and protect our rights if we can't do it on our own.

♦Liz Esposito. She was a smoker until she started looking for an apartment and couldn't find one unless she quit. She started smoking in public parks because she couldn't smoke at her parents' house. She can see regulations of tobacco in public parks the same way we would regulate open containers of alcohol. It's something we don't want around youth and public. Anyone can choose to smoke in public but there will be repercussions. This is not as scary as people make it out to be.


CLOSE PUBLIC FORUM – 7:01 p.m.



ATTEST:



Lisa Scholl, Administrative Assistant



Randy Peterson, Mayor