

From "Buzby, Maureen" <mbuzby@CityofMelrose.org>
To "boh@doverma.gov" <boh@doverma.gov>
Date 2025-04-08 01:16:47+00:00
Subject FW: Follow up to NFG discussion Attn: Jason Belmonte

Hi Jason,

Not only did the photos I tried to send earlier bounce back so did the email below. Trying again...

Maureen

From: Buzby, Maureen
Sent: Monday, April 7, 2025 8:57 PM
To: jason.belmonte@doverma.gov
Subject: Follow up to NFG discussion

Thank you for the work you do and for your help getting NFG on the Board of Health meeting agenda. Please pass along my appreciation to Board members for their diligence in examining this important public health policy.

Also, please let me know if you received the photos I tried to send. One email bounced back with a "spam alert". I can try some other way to share the photos with you if you did not receive them via email. I can print and mail via USPS if necessary. I do feel they are worth seeing. Especially since I bought them the day before our State House meeting – at a store that recently sold to a minor.

You may already have this information. So far fifteen municipalities have adopted NFG. One by town bylaw (Brookline), one by city ordinance (Newton), and one by resolution (Pelham). The rest are all BOH Tobacco Sales Regulation amendments.

I think you and your Board are probably also aware that an NFG bill has been filed in both the State Senate and House. But, as was the case for Smoke Free Workplace Law twenty years ago, state legislators generally want to see a

significant number of municipalities and/or a good percentage of the state's population covered by public health policy before they take it up in Committee and then on to a vote. That's one of the reasons we would like to see Dover (and other communities) adopt NFG.

The other reason is, of course, that every day more young people get addicted to nicotine products. That's the main reason Newton, instead of waiting until the beginning of a calendar year, chose a date just two months out from when they voted on the policy. They felt it was important not to wait any longer. The City Council vote was 19 to 4.

I wanted to take a moment to address the community readiness question and the retailer education process. Both were concerns in the six communities in my region that adopted NFG in 2024, especially since we were so early in NFG policy effort. When these six communities voted, one by one, only Brookline has passed an NFG type policy.

We started by talking with community partners - - city council or selectboard members, school committee members, mayors and town managers, educators, health care professionals, youth workers, students, and parents. For the most part the reaction was, as it was with your Board tonight, hold a public hearing and let everyone have a say.

What we felt was most important was to make sure retailers were aware. Before every public hearing, which was posted per state law, we emailed every retailer that had a tobacco permit. Knowing that not all retailers keep up with email, we also sent a letter via USPS. And knowing that not all retailers open and read their mail, we also hand-delivered a hard copy of the meeting notice to every single retailer. That personal visit also allowed for an additional opportunity to discuss the proposed policy. Many retailers, surprisingly, were actually in favor. Many have young children. They sell tobacco because they feel they have to to be competitive with other area retailers but they don't really like it. They also shared their views that it should be state law. We feel the same but we know that, especially here in Massachusetts, good public health policy starts at the local level and only when we reach critical mass does it become state law. That is the goal with NFG. Luckily, some very courageous Boards, as with Smoke-Free Workplace Law, saw the potential to improve residents' health and made a very bold choice.

I have one medium sized city – Malden with 60,000 residents, and then smaller

towns like Winchester, with 23,000. Malden has 54 tobacco retailers and Winchester has just five.

Most of the public hearings in this area had twenty to forty attendees. One town had 80 plus in attendance - - filled the selectboard chamber, an overflow room, and the hallway. Some attendees spoke, some didn't. There were advocates who spoke in favor – as we saw tonight. And there were retailers, distributors, trade association executives, and other industry representatives who spoke against.

Once the policy passed we started a second round of retailer education. Notices with the policy language were sent to every tobacco retailer as is the case with any new tobacco policy. Next a letter in plain language reminding all retailers of the policy effective date. Then each retailer was visited with new signage and yet another letter with training tips. The policy is actually more simple than it seems at first but we wanted to make sure that retailers had wording that would help explain the policy to staff members better than the policy language does.

Most of the fifteen municipalities that have already adopted NFG have a January 1, 2025 effective date. People often ask us how it's going. It's too early to have any actual compliance data. And it may be years before we have "proof" of the policy's effectiveness. That is just the way it is with new public health policy.

Kate Silbaugh shared some of the cities and towns currently is some stage of considering NFG. In addition, I presented to Pittsfield in January and to Buckland (had to look it up) a few weeks ago. I also presented to the Berkshire Public Health Alliance which is made up of twenty-four Western Mass municipalities. I'll be presenting to Lee/Lennox/Sturbridge Tri-Town Wednesday evening (virtually). And then traveling to Mansfield to present to their Board of Health Thursday evening, and then out to Hopkinton next Monday evening. I'm actively working with Topsfield/Middleton/Boxford's Tri-Town Council. And with North Reading's Substance Prevention Coalition.

I'm sorry for the length of this email but I wanted to put some notes in writing to try to help answer some of the outstanding questions. I am of course happy to respond to additional questions and to share any information that might be helpful to your Board as you continue to consider this important Public Health policy.

Again, thank you for your time tonight, and at the prior meeting. And for reading this long email.

Best regards,

Maureen

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