
Re: Vaping

8 messages

Salem Derby <sderby@easthamptonma.gov>

Thu, Feb 19, 2026 at 11:37 AM

To: Angelique Baker <lovemykids312@gmail.com>, Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov>

Cc: Felicia Jadczyk <fjadczyk@easthamptonma.gov>, Koni Denham <kdenham@easthamptonma.gov>

Hi Angelique,

I am happy to chat about this. But I am going to loop Ryan Griffin, the health director, in here. I can say for certain that we have busted stores selling vapes and have shut them down. If there are stores in the city that are selling illegal vapes, we will do our best to stop that practice. As a high school teacher, I can tell you vaping in school is not a new problem, and that teachers and administrators do not turn a blind eye to it. It is a serious offense and will result in disciplinary action. I know the health department is involved in prevention, as are the schools. But I'll defer to Ryan on this issue as I am sure he has more familiarity with the issue.

Thanks,

On Wed, Feb 18, 2026 at 8:08 PM Angelique Baker <lovemykids312@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi there, I was wondering what exactly is going on with all the vaping inside the school and the vapes that have been sold in town to underage kids. I'm wondering where we are at that because in talking to the school and talking to the police they kind of said like they can't do a lot and they don't get a lot of complaints so they can't really investigate them and an eye for one. I wanna know which stores are selling them to underage kids and I also wanna know how to catch the dealers that are sending them to Kids. Especially marijuana, etc. and this is really really important and I don't like that the police just kind of said it's out of their hands cause they don't really get many reports. I don't believe that's true and I was on the healthy youth coalition for like 10 years and all we heard about was vaping and how dangerous it is and now people are just kind of letting vaping go like it's not a big deal and it's a huge deal. So is there anything that you can do to help with all of this? Thank you so much for your time

Thank you so much
Angelique Baker

Salem Derby
Mayor, City of Easthampton

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Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov>

Thu, Feb 19, 2026 at 3:28 PM

To: Angelique Baker <lovemykids312@gmail.com>

Cc: Felicia Jadczyk <fjadczyk@easthamptonma.gov>, Koni Denham <kdenham@easthamptonma.gov>, Salem Derby <sderby@easthamptonma.gov>

Hi Angelique,

First, I want to thank you for your concern. Tobacco and nicotine use, although declining overall, remains a major public health concern, especially among youth, and it is a major focus of mine here in Easthampton.

In Hampshire County, by 12th grade, approximately one in three students report having tried vaping, and local 12th graders report smoking rates higher than the national average. While prevention efforts are making progress, this remains concerning, and we take it very seriously.

In Easthampton, we conduct regular tobacco inspections to ensure permitted retailers are not selling illegal products (including flavored products where prohibited) and to verify compliance with all local and state regulations. We also conduct regular youth compliance checks, where trained underage compliance officers attempt to purchase tobacco products from permitted establishments.

During our most recent compliance check, there was one violation among all our permitted tobacco retailers at Gerry's Variety. Because it was their first violation within a 36-month period, they received:

- A \$1,100 fine
- A mandatory 3-day suspension of their tobacco permit

For context, our enforcement structure is as follows:

- **Second violation within 36 months:** \$2,200 fine, 7-day suspension, and mandatory Board of Health hearing
- **Third violation within 36 months:** \$5,300 fine and minimum 30-day suspension, with strong likelihood of permanent revocation

As the Mayor mentioned, this is exactly what happened in December 2024, when the Board of Health permanently revoked Valley Farms' tobacco permit for continued non-compliance. We do not hesitate to take strong enforcement action when necessary.

That said, our authority extends to permitted establishments. If residents have specific information about illegal sales or unpermitted activity, we encourage them to report it. When we receive reports of unpermitted tobacco sales, we investigate and pursue enforcement to the full extent of the law. As EPD noted, we receive very few formal complaints, and actionable information is critical to targeted enforcement.

Licensed marijuana retailers are heavily regulated at the state level through the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission. These establishments operate under strict requirements, including mandatory ID verification before entry into the retail area, surveillance systems, inventory tracking, and severe penalties for any sale to a minor. I am confident that our licensed marijuana retailers understand the seriousness of compliance and the significant consequences of violations. Any sale or distribution of marijuana products to a minor would be a criminal matter handled by the Police Department.

Beyond enforcement, the Board of Health has been working closely with the Mayor's Office and other City officials on additional strategies to address youth tobacco and nicotine use more broadly.

In the coming month, toward the end of March (exact date to be announced soon), the Board of Health will hold an in-person public hearing to review proposed updates to Easthampton's tobacco regulations and receive public comment.

Proposed changes include:

- **Implementing a Nicotine-Free Generational Tobacco Ban** (the minimum legal sales age would increase by one year, every year — 21, then 22, then 23, and so on). This approach ensures that individuals currently under 21 would never become eligible to purchase tobacco products in Easthampton, creating a gradual, generational phase-out of tobacco sales.
- **Limiting or banning nicotine pouch products** (such as Zyn), which are increasingly popular among youth
- **No longer issuing new tobacco permits and permanently retiring permits** that are not renewed (we are currently at 12 permitted retailers in the City)

More than 20 municipalities in Massachusetts have implemented similar regulations, including nearby Belchertown, Amherst, South Hadley, and Leverett.

The Board of Health is very interested in hearing from residents like yourself at this public hearing. Community voices matter greatly in these discussions. As more municipalities adopt stronger regulations, there is hope that statewide legislation may eventually follow — as happened when the legal age was raised to 21.

Your in-person support, and that of other concerned residents, will be important at this hearing, particularly as there has been increasing pushback from tobacco industry representatives and retailers.

These measures will not eliminate youth vaping entirely. However, reducing retail access and enforcing age-restriction laws significantly lowers youth initiation and overall use. When combined with prevention and education efforts, strong local policy remains highly effective.

Feel free to reach out anytime with questions or concerns. Thank you,

Ryan Griffin

Director of Public Health, Easthampton

☎ 413-529-1400 x 122

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3 attachments

 **Hampshire County_2025 PNAS results_SMOKING.pdf**
1142K

 **Hampshire County_2025 PNAS results_VAPING.pdf**
1147K

 **Gerry's Variety- Tobacco fine_suspension 1.22.26 (2).pdf**
167K

Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov>

Thu, Feb 19, 2026 at 3:46 PM

To: Salem Derby <sderby@easthamptonma.gov>, Felicia Jadczyk <fjadczyk@easthamptonma.gov>, Koni Denham <kdenham@easthamptonma.gov>

Just a quick update from last night's BOH meeting - Thanks for attending, Mayor!

BOH agreed to move forward with scheduling a public hearing (end of March) to consider strengthening our local tobacco regulations, including a potential Nicotine-Free Generational (NFG) policy.

This has been a big goal of mine for a while. I genuinely believe this is one of the most meaningful long-term public health steps we can take as a City, and I'd really like to see Easthampton join the 20+ municipalities in Massachusetts that have already adopted similar regulations.

It might make sense for me to do a brief 10–15 minute Health Department correspondence at an upcoming Council meeting to walk through the proposal, explain how NFG works (it wouldn't affect anyone who is already legally able to purchase tobacco — only those not yet 21), highlight nearby communities that have implemented it, clarify BOH authority, and answer any questions.

As we've seen in other cities that have considered this, there will be pushback and some misinformation from retailers and the tobacco industry. If anything comes your way, please feel free to send it my way.

I really believe in this, and your support would mean a lot.

Let me know your thoughts.

Also, President Deham, I wanted to thank you for reminding the Council (Public Safety Committee) and, more importantly, residents about the Health Department and our role in Easthampton. Part of our work now is rebuilding and reinforcing what the department can and should be doing for the community. I appreciated you bringing us into that conversation

Thank you,

Ryan Griffin

Director of Public Health, Easthampton

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Koni Denham <kdenham@easthamptonma.gov>

Thu, Feb 19, 2026 at 3:59 PM

To: Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov>

Cc: Salem Derby <sderby@easthamptonma.gov>, Felicia Jadczyk <fjadczak@easthamptonma.gov>

Hi Ryan,

I hope all is well. Thanks so much for all this information. Yes, we'd appreciate you coming to a future city council meeting. When would you like to attend? I can put you on the schedule for March 4th. We do have a public hearing on March 18, so I'm not sure you'd want to come that night. That might change, but it is scheduled for now. Let me know what will be best for you. I appreciate you and your work for the community.

Respectfully,
Koni

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Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov>

Thu, Feb 19, 2026 at 4:05 PM

To: Koni Denham <kdenham@easthamptonma.gov>

Cc: Salem Derby <sderby@easthamptonma.gov>, Felicia Jadczyk <fjadczak@easthamptonma.gov>

I'll plan on March 4th- by then I should have a Hearing date. Will send over a copy of the proposed regs early next week.

Ryan Griffin

Director of Public Health, Easthampton

☎ 413-529-1400 x 122

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Koni Denham <kdenham@easthamptonma.gov>

Thu, Feb 19, 2026 at 4:48 PM

To: Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov>, Mary Ann Giza <mgiza@easthamptonma.gov>

Cc: Salem Derby <sderby@easthamptonma.gov>, Felicia Jadczyk <fjadczak@easthamptonma.gov>

Hi Ryan and Mary Ann,

I hope all is well. Terrific! We'll put you on the agenda for March 4th. Let us know the language next week.

Mary Ann - can you the Ryan on the March 4th agenda under correspondence.

Nicotine-Free Generational Tobacco Ban

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks

Respectfully,
Koni

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Mary Ann Giza <mgiza@easthamptonma.gov>

Thu, Feb 19, 2026 at 4:58 PM

To: Koni Denham <kdenham@easthamptonma.gov>

Cc: Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov>, Salem Derby <sderby@easthamptonma.gov>, Felicia Jadczak <fjadczak@easthamptonma.gov>

Yes, I will add this to the City Council March 4th agenda.

Mary Ann

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Angelique Baker <lovemykids312@gmail.com>

Thu, Feb 19, 2026 at 5:07 PM

To: Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov>

Cc: Felicia Jadczak <fjadczak@easthamptonma.gov>, Koni Denham <kdenham@easthamptonma.gov>, Salem Derby <SDerby@easthamptonma.gov>

I hear what you're saying, but there are dealers left and right that my daughter's friends are buying from. And obviously they're not gonna tell you who they are, but they're left and right and also the online sales just require you to click a box that you promised that you're over 21 and then they get mailed to people's house. I've been told by these teenagers over and over that when the police catch them smoking weed, they just tell them to move along. They don't arrest them or get them in trouble or take the weed or anything. They just get told to get going, which is not appropriate. That shows me that the officer doesn't think it's a very big deal.

Angelique Baker

On Feb 19, 2026, at 3:29 PM, Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov> wrote:

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