

From: Buzby, Maureen <mbuzby@CityofMelrose.org>
Sent: Mar 09, 2025 18:49:59.000000000 UTC
Subject: FW: Pittsfield
To: Buzby, Maureen <mbuzby@CityofMelrose.org>

From: Buzby, Maureen <mbuzby@CityofMelrose.org>
Sent: Tuesday, January 14, 2025 10:11 AM
To: Jim Wilusz <Jim@tritownhealth.org>
Subject: FW: Pittsfield

This is basically what I said. Maybe a few edits on the fly. Feel free to cut and paste and use what you need.

From: Buzby, Maureen <mbuzby@CityofMelrose.org>
Sent: Tuesday, January 7, 2025 3:02 PM
To: Buzby, Maureen <mbuzby@CityofMelrose.org>
Subject: FW: Pittsfield

Nicotine Free Generation

Thank you.

I am the Tobacco Prevention Program Manager for seven cities and towns in the Mystic Valley region.

We all know that tobacco use is still the leading cause of preventable death in the US. Every year almost half a million Americans die prematurely of smoking related disease. And billions of dollars are spent on smoking related illnesses.

Over the past several decades local boards of health like this one have led the way in adopting regulations that improve the health of local residents.

. Local boards led the campaign for a smoke-free workplace law two decades ago, against extreme pushback, town by town, city by city, until there was critical mass and Smoke Free Work Place became state law.

And now we can't imagine going into a restaurant, theater or bar, say nothing about a hospital or a school; or riding on a subway, bus, train or plane where someone is smoking.

. Local Boards adopted many tobacco regulations over the years all of which were designed to reduce youth access to tobacco. Local Boards

were early adopters of T-21, pharmacy ban, flavor restriction, cigar minimum price, permit cap, and proximity ban, as well as a ban on smoking bars. Some of these policies have since become state law.

These policies, and I'm proud to have worked on many of them, moved the needle - a bit. However, people still smoke, millions are still affected by second-hand smoke; vaping in our schools remains a serious issue, and the tobacco industry continues to develop and market new, appealing, cheap, discrete, and high nicotine content products like nicotine pouches with 14, 15 or 18 milligrams of nicotine in each pouch. Compare that to a pack of cigarettes with 24 milligrams in the entire pack.

Or the vape pen that looks just like a highlighter. Or the vape device with an LED screen that tells you how many puffs you have left to trigger you to go buy another one. Or the newest vapes with built-in video games. Yes, play Mario Bros. while you vape.

Back in 2020 the Town of Brookline passed a by-law that made it illegal for Brookline retailers to sell tobacco to anyone born after 1/1/2000.

It's actually pretty simple. As of 1/1/2020, anyone purchasing a tobacco product has to be born before 1/1/2000. Brookline retailers have to remember one date, whereas now the Minimum Legal Sales Age changes every single day.

No one who is already 21 loses his or her "privilege" to purchase tobacco products. This policy only affects those who do not now and have never been able to legally buy nicotine products. It's a slow rollout that allows for retailers to adjust to lower tobacco sales over an extended period of time, unlike the flavor ban that removed all flavored products from retailers' shelves on day one.

Almost two years ago Anthony Chou, Health Director for Melrose, Wakefield and Stoneham, and I started discussing about the possibility of introducing TFG, as it was known at the time, to cities and towns in my collaborative.

We started by meeting with our local prevention partners, educators, health care professionals, and youth workers, and then moved on to talk with other stakeholders, especially those in municipal government –

mayors, Town Managers, City Council and Selectboard members, School Committee members and others.

I presented NFG (renamed from TFG so it would be clear that this policy covers all nicotine delivery products not just traditional combustible tobacco)

to each Board, one-by-one. In each case Board members voted to move to the next step- - a Public Hearing.

It's not required but this is a big policy and we wanted to be sure everyone had a chance to weigh in. In fact, we not only sent retailer communication through normal channels (email and regular US Postal Service mail), I hand-delivered a copy of the public hearing notice to every single tobacco retailer in my region.

Sometimes right after an RJ Reynolds or other industry rep had been there.

Turnout at the hearings ranged from a low of ten in one city to almost one hundred in another. There was, as expected, opposition from retailers, distributors, trade association execs, and even a few smokers. Some of the turnout resulted from flyers posted in store windows by opponents. And many of you have probably received robo emails sent from all over the country advising you to reject this policy. Municipalities who have not even discussed NFG yet have been bombarded by a well-funded industry. Not a surprise.

Four communities in my region held public hearings before we learned the outcome of the lawsuit filed against Brookline. Last March the SJC, Massachusetts' highest court, delivered a unanimous decision in favor of Brookline's right to pass the TFG by-law. Immediately after that verdict Stoneham became the first BOH in the world to adopt NFG, followed by Wakefield and Melrose. And then Malden, Winchester and Reading. And more recently Concord, Manchester, Chelsea, Belchertown, Needham, and counting.

The goal, as it was for the Smoke Free Workplace law, is to get enough cities and towns to adopt NFG that it becomes more likely to be adopted as state law. Bill sponsors, one from the Senate and one from the House, are working on language for a statewide bill as we speak.

This policy starts to move us towards the end of tobacco use and addiction which has harmed millions and cost billions for decades.

In summary:

- . Retailers have a long time to get used to lower tobacco sales.
- . Each year just one year's worth of potential new buyers will not be able to legally buy tobacco products.
- . Lots of lead time, no one gets a "privilege" taken away, it's easy to administer, and we finally move towards a nicotine free generation, saving lives and millions, actually billions, in health care costs.

I am happy to take questions now. And I believe there are Massachusetts based, nationally recognized tobacco prevention experts on Zoom if you have questions that I can't answer adequately.

Thank you.

Maureen Buzby
January 2025

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