

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 17, 2012
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER *Rmy*
SUBJECT: REPORT ON RESULTS OF INSTALLATION OF SIGNS DISCOURAGING SMOKING IN CITY PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS AND RECOMMENDATION ON INSTALLATION OF SIGNS IN CITY-OWNED BUS SHELTERS

ISSUE: Consideration of report on the installation of signs that discourage smoking in public parks and on playgrounds and recommendation on installation of such signs in City-owned bus shelters in Alexandria.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- 1) Receive this report; and
- 2) Authorize the Alexandria Health Department to work with the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services and Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Activities staff to continue installation of signs that discourage smoking in 122 City bus shelters and 86 City parks at this time. Staff recommends that the signs read (as approved previously): "For everyone's health, thank you for not smoking in our parks and playgrounds" and "For everyone's health, thank you for not smoking" for bus shelter signs.

BACKGROUND: On May 24, 2011, City Council approved a resolution that requested:

- 1) City staff to place a sign discouraging smoking in each of the City playgrounds over the summer 2011; and
- 2) City staff review the sign program and report back to Council on the feasibility of continuing with the next phases of installing similar signs to discourage smoking in City-owned bus shelters and City parks.

The resolution received support from the Alexandria Public Health Advisory Commission; the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission; the Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission; the Alexandria Community Services Board; the Alexandria Coalition for Clean and Smoke Free Air, the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria; the Partnership for a

Healthier Alexandria; and INOVA Alexandria Hospital's chief executive officer, medical staff president, chief medical officer and respiratory services director.

Arlington County recently launched a Smoke-Free Parks Initiative that asks park patrons to refrain from smoking within 50 feet of areas of congregation in parks such as ball fields, pavilions and playgrounds. Smoke free signage is currently being posted in all of their parks. In November 2010, Fairfax County decided to place smoke free signs in their bus shelters.

DISCUSSION: In June 2011, staff from the Alexandria Health Department (AHD) received bids from several vendors. All playground signs were purchased from the City of Alexandria Sign Shop at a cost of \$630. Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA) staff worked with AHD staff to determine appropriate sign placement with an emphasis on posting signs near existing signage and on existing posts and fences. During July and August, 2011, RPCA maintenance staff installed 34 signs on City owned playgrounds; according to the RPCA Director. the installation costs were negligible.

In September 2011, AHD staff developed a simple survey consisting of one question, "Do you like this sign?" with the response options of: 1) Yes; 2) No; or 3) Unsure/ No opinion/Don't know. AHD staff trained volunteers of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) to conduct the surveys at each playground; the volunteers were instructed to visit assigned playgrounds during the weekdays between the hours of 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. or on the weekends. They were asked to stay for at least an hour on site or until they had conducted ten surveys of adults. MRC volunteers showed a picture of the sign, asked the survey question and collected any additional comments that respondents made. The surveys were conducted from September 23, 2011, through October 3, 2011. A total of 157 surveys were completed; 91.7% of respondents stated that they liked the sign; 3.8% said they did not like the sign; and 4.5% said they had no opinion.

Based on the positive survey response to the already installed signs that discourage smoking on playgrounds; on the well-documented public health evidence that tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease, disability and death in the United States; that exposure to environmental tobacco smoke ("second hand smoke") is a preventable cause of significant disability and death; and that the most effective strategies to reduce tobacco initiation and cessation require multiple, comprehensive community strategies, staff recommends that Council authorize AHD and associated departments to:

- 1) Place additional signs in eight playgrounds with multiple entrances (one additional sign for each of the eight).
- 2) Place signs in 86 City parks (See Attachment #2)
Notes: there are 108 City parks; 22 have playgrounds which already have signs posted, therefore only 86 of the parks need signs. 25 of the larger parks, with multiple entrances, need an additional sign for adequate exposure, so staff recommends placement of 111 signs in the parks.
- 3) Place the message to discourage smoking in the 122 City bus shelters as a byline below bus maps as they are installed by Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES). T&ES stated this would be the best option for the aesthetic design of the new bus shelters; T&ES stated that no cost would be incurred as they are already in the process of printing new maps (See Attachments #3)

T&ES' plans are to install new bus shelters throughout the City. The first ten bus shelters are scheduled to be installed in spring 2012 and the next group of shelters (approximately 25) are slated for installation in summer/fall 2012; the remaining will be installed in early winter 2012 through spring 2013. A number of steps need to be accomplished to meet this timeline (e.g. issuing a requisition to Procurement for some of the shelters and completing National Environmental Policy Act for other shelters). Funding for the shelters has been secured mostly (97%) from federal grants Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration).

The Health Department has concerns about the amount of time it may take to get the public health message promulgated on the bus shelter replacement time schedule, particularly if there are delays in new City bus shelters being installed. The Health Department has attempted to develop a transitional sign program that would enable transitional signs to be placed immediately after Council approval, but has encountered a number of obstacles. Current challenges to transitional signs include proper design and installation that will be aesthetically acceptable and resistant to adverse weather and routine power cleaning and the method and cost of installation. If the Health Department can develop a transitional sign plan that is feasible, it will return to Council with details for Council's consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT: Total cost estimates are \$2142, as follows:

- 1) 8 – 12”x 18” signs in playgrounds with second entrances – sign cost of \$144
Note: these 8 signs are in addition to the 34 signs placed in playgrounds and will be placed at secondary entrances of the larger playgrounds)
Installation by RPCA staff during regularly scheduled maintenance – negligible
- 2) 111 – 12”x 18” sign in 86 City parks – sign cost of \$1,998
Note: all 86 City parks will have signs place; 25 additional signs will be placed in larger parks with multiple entrances (where RPCA signs already exist)
Installation by RPCA during regularly scheduled maintenance – negligible
- 3) 122 signs as a byline below new bus maps – no costs
Note: T&ES states that placement of the message to discourage smoking in the 122 City bus shelters as a byline below new bus maps incur no costs (T&ES is already planning to print and post the new maps over the next year).

Total cost is estimated at \$2,142. The Health Department has \$4,370 available from the original \$5,000 allocated for the discouraging smoking signs program. The funds available will cover the entire cost of the signage.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Resolution discouraging smoking in parks, playgrounds, and bus shelters that City Council approved on May 24, 2011.

Attachment 2: Proposed City parks sign

Attachment 3: Proposed design and byline space for bus shelter sign

STAFF:

Stephen A. Haering, MD, MPH, Director, Alexandria Health Department

Bob Custard, Alexandria Health Department

Carrie Fesperman Redden, Alexandria Health Department

Pierre Holloman / Rich Baier, T&ES

RESOLUTION NO. 2453

WHEREAS, Goal 2 in the City Council's Strategic Plan states that "Alexandria respects, protects and enhances the health of its citizens and the quality of its natural environment;" and

WHEREAS, Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan also calls for an initiative to "establish a proactive health program to reduce respiratory illness by reducing exposure to second hand smoke and indoor air contaminants;" and

WHEREAS, Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan states that, "Alexandria is a community that supports and enhances the well-being, success and achievement of children, youth and families;" and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Eco-City Action Plan calls for "the promotion of respiratory health and improvement in air quality by reducing exposures to such air contaminants as secondhand smoke;" and

WHEREAS, there is clear evidence that exposure to second-hand smoke causes disease and premature death in children and adults who do not smoke; and

WHEREAS, the Surgeon General of the United States has stated that, "There is no risk-free level of exposure to second-hand smoke. Even small amounts of second hand smoke exposure can be harmful to people's health;" and

WHEREAS, brief exposure to second-hand smoke places children at greater risk for early atherosclerosis, decreased lung function, increased rates of bronchitis, pneumonia and respiratory functions; development of cancer, heart disease and lung disease; build-up of fluid in the inner ear; and behavioral problems; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that approximately one person in eight in the City of Alexandria suffers from a respiratory disease and tobacco smoke is the greatest single cause of respiratory illness; and

WHEREAS, data from the American Lung Association estimates that there are more than 11,400 person with asthma and more than 5,300 persons with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) including emphysema and chronic bronchitis in the City of Alexandria; and

WHEREAS, a significant number of emergency visits and hospitalizations at INOVA Alexandria Hospital each year are attributed to asthma; and

WHEREAS, our public spaces – such as parks and playgrounds – exist to foster health and recreation; and

WHEREAS, City-owned bus shelters exist to protect citizens and visitors from inclement weather, and those who use our bus shelters, including children and teens, should not be exposed to second-hand smoke; and

WHEREAS, many localities across the nation have taken action to reduce the amount of second hand smoke in public areas;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alexandria City Council:

Asks that our community members be considerate of others and assist in keeping City parks, playgrounds, and City-owned bus shelters smoke-free; and

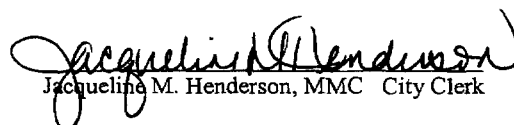
Requests that City staff place a sign discouraging smoking in each of our City playgrounds this summer; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council requests that staff review the sign program and report back to Council in the fall on the feasibility of installing similar signs discouraging smoking around children and others in City parks and in City-owned bus shelters.

Adopted: May 24, 2011


WILLIAM D. EULLE MAYOR

ATTEST:


Jacqueline M. Henderson, MMC City Clerk

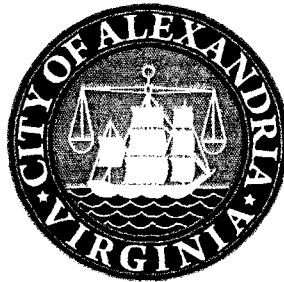
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5-24-11

Concerning Docket Item #12: New proposed language for signs appearing in City parks, playgrounds, bus shelters.

For everyone's health, thank you for not smoking in our parks and playgrounds.

For everyone's health, thank you for not smoking in our bus shelters.

For everyone's health,
thank you for not
smoking in our parks
and playgrounds.



*If you need help to quit
smoking, call 1-800-QUIT NOW
or go to www.smokefree.gov.*

This Space For Map/Bus Route

(H) 36.35"

(H) 41.5"

Viewable Area for Art/ Public Information: (H) 36.35" X (W) 35.75"

Paper Size (including grey ddot area): (H) 41.5" X (W) 35.75"

Reserved for ddot info, (W) 35.75" X (H) 3.65"

Viewable Area: (W) 35.75" X (H) 2.90"

For everyone's health, thank you for not smoking.

If you need help to quit smoking, call 1-800-QUIT NOW or go to www.smokefree.gov.



(W) 35.75"