

Pepper

orals
4-26-11

RESOLUTION URGING CITY COUNCIL TO AUTHORIZE PLACEMENT OF
SIGNS DISCOURAGING SMOKING IN PUBLIC PARKS, ON PLAYGROUNDS
AND IN AND AROUND CITY-OWNED BUS SHELTERS

Adopted by a unanimous vote of 8-0 by
The Alexandria Public Health Advisory Commission
(April 21, 2011)

WHEREAS, Goal #2 of the seven goals in the City Council's Strategic Plan states: "Alexandria respects, protects and enhances the health of its citizens and the quality of its natural environment." and

WHEREAS, Goal #2 of City Council's Strategic Plan 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: "Alexandria is a community that supports and enhances the well-being, success and achievement of children, youth and families." and

WHEREAS, the Eco-City Alexandria 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, the evidence is very clear, 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 declared, "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, even brief exposure to second-hand smoke can result in upper airway changes in healthy persons and can lead to more frequent asthma attacks in children who already have asthma; and

WHEREAS, even 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; developing cancer, heart disease and lung disease; build up of fluid in the inner ear; and behavioral problems; and

WHEREAS, approximately one person in eight in the City of Alexandria suffers from a respiratory disease; and

WHEREAS, 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 COPD (emphysema and chronic bronchitis) in the City of Alexandria; and

WHEREAS, exposure to secondhand smoke is a trigger for asthma and responsible for preventable emergency visits and hospitalizations at Inova Alexandria Hospital; and

WHEREAS, public spaces – such as parks and playgrounds – exist for the very purpose of fostering good health and recreation, and therefore those who frequent such spaces ought not be exposed to the dangers of unnecessary and harmful air contaminants such as second-hand smoke; and

WHEREAS, city-owned and maintained bus shelters exist for the primary purpose of protecting citizens and visitors from the dangers of inclement weather while waiting to board a bus, and therefore those who depend on such public transportation should not, at the same time, be exposed to other, far more dangerous threats to their personal health and safety such as second-hand smoke; and

WHEREAS, a considerable number of children and teens in Alexandria ride city buses to school each day;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alexandria Public Health Advisory Commission:

BELIEVES strongly that a city-wide effort to discourage smoking in public parks, on playgrounds and in and around city-owned bus shelters would make a significant contribution to the overall public health and well-being of the City of Alexandria; and

URGES City Council to authorize the placement of signs at all public parks and playgrounds and at all city-owned bus shelters discouraging smoking at and nearby those sites.

RESOLUTION No. _____

The Alexandria City Council hereby finds and declares as follows:

WHEREAS, Goal #2 of the seven goals in the City Council's Strategic Plan states: "Alexandria respects, protects and enhances the health of its citizens and the quality of its natural environment." and

WHEREAS, Goal #2 of City Council's Strategic Plan 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: "Alexandria is a community that supports and enhances the well-being, success and achievement of children, youth and families." and

WHEREAS, the Eco-City Alexandria 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, the evidence is very clear, 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 declared, "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, even brief exposure to second-hand smoke can result in upper airway changes in healthy persons and can lead to more frequent asthma attacks in children who already have asthma; and

WHEREAS, even 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; developing cancer, heart disease and lung disease; build up of fluid in the inner ear; and behavioral problems; and

WHEREAS, approximately one person in eight in the City of Alexandria suffers from a respiratory disease; and

WHEREAS, 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 COPD (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, the tobacco industry spends more than 40 times the amount to attract our children to tobacco than the state spends to protect them from the harmful effects of tobacco; and

WHEREAS, state funding for tobacco prevention in Virginia will be \$9.4 million in FY 2011, representing a \$2.9 million decrease in funding over FY 2010; and

WHEREAS, public spaces – such as parks and playgrounds – exist for the very purpose of fostering good health and recreation, and therefore those who frequent such spaces ought not be exposed to the dangers of unnecessary and harmful air contaminants such as second-hand smoke; and

WHEREAS, city-owned and maintained bus shelters exist for the primary purpose of protecting citizens and visitors from the dangers of inclement weather while waiting to board a bus, and therefore those who depend on such public transportation should not, at the same time, be exposed to other, far more dangerous threats to their personal health and safety such as second-hand smoke; and

WHEREAS, a considerable number of children and teens in Alexandria ride city buses to school each day; and

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

AFFIRMS its strong support for discouraging smoking in parks and on playgrounds owned and operated by the City; and

AFFIRMS its strong support for discouraging smoking in and around city-owned bus shelters; and

DIRECTS that signs be placed in all public parks and playgrounds with the following message: ***For the sake of your health and those around you, please help us keep our parks and playgrounds smoke-free. If you need help to quit smoking, call 1-800-QUIT NOW or go to www.smokefree.gov.***

DIRECTS that signs be placed at all city-owned and maintained bus shelters with the following message: ***For the sake of your health and those around you, please help us keep our bus shelters smoke-free. If you need help to quit smoking, call 1-800-QUIT NOW or go to www.smokefree.gov.***

I have been advised by the City Attorney that the resolution being considered would be legally supportable with some changes in the last two paragraphs:

Beginning with changing the words "DIRECTS" to "SUPPORTS"—that paragraph should read:

SUPPORTS the placing of signs in all public parks and playgrounds with the following message: For the sake of your health and those around you, please consider not smoking. If you need help to quit smoking, call 1-800-QUIT NOW or go to www.smokefree.gov.

SUPPORTS the placing of signs in all city owned and maintained bus shelters with the following message: For the sake of your health and those around you, please consider not smoking. If you need help to quit smoking, call 1-800-QUIT NOW or go to www.smokefree.gov.