

Ross Valley Reporter

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## **Town of Fairfax bans use of e-cigarettes**

**By Jake Thomer Marinscope contributor | Posted: Wednesday, July 15, 2015 12:57 pm**

Joining other Marin cities in a growing nationwide trend, Fairfax has banned the smoking of e-cigarettes in all public places where regular cigarettes cannot be smoked.

The ordinance, which according to Fairfax Mayor Barbara Coler had little resistance among local residents, was approved at the June 3 Town Council meeting and went into effect on July 3.

Coler said she was “surprised, but pleased” that the ordinance was met with such minimal blowback.

“We typically have a lot of people come out on issues, but for some reason on this one people didn’t fight it,” said Coler, who went on to add that she was nevertheless happy that her town’s residents appeared to agree with the council.

Jennie Cook, head of the Smoke Free Marin Coalition, said that tobacco companies are marketing e-cigarettes to teenagers by using fruity flavors and advertising campaigns that traditional tobacco products have been unable to use.

“We were making great strides with smoking in this country, and I’m worried this new trend is slowing our progress,” said Cook, who added that this law joins similar e-cigarette bans already established in Corte Madera, Mill Valley, Tiburon, and the unincorporated areas of the county.

E-cigs, as they are colloquially called, can also be referred to as “vape” pens, hookah pens, and e-hookahs.

According to Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights, nearly 400 towns across the country have implemented bans against e-cigarettes.

Research on the exact health effects of e-cigs has been controversial, with companies that make the products calling them safe alternatives to smoking traditional cigarettes, and anti-tobacco groups such as Smoke Free Marin saying they are just as bad.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse, a government-funded research group, admits on its website that the debate is difficult to settle because “unfortunately, insufficient information is available on these new products.”

Regardless, the Fairfax Town Council unanimously agreed that the potential risks of e-cigarettes were enough to ban them from public places in the city.

Coler said it took only about six months to push the ordinance through the legislative process, and said, “I’m very grateful that the council gave unanimous support on this issue.”

Cook believes Marin residents will show support of future legislation that bans e-cigarettes, which she said is actively in the works in several local towns.

“I think Marin is very health-conscious, and I feel very strongly that every city should pass this type of law,” Cook said.

Coler is now satisfied that her town has added its name to the list of cities with e-cigarette bans.

“Fairfax is a very healthy place, and we want to keep it that way,” she said.

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