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Expanded Smoking Regulations Ready for Prime Time

By Cathy Tyson

Restrictions will be added to Lafayette's existing regulations that expand areas where smoking isn't allowed as of mid-December. Citing scientific studies that cigarette and cigar smoking causes a host of diseases, the City Council recently voted to support public health by discouraging "the inherently dangerous behavior of tobacco use near non-tobacco users" according to the staff report, along with protecting children from exposure to smoking and tobacco. The new ordinance will support extending the smoking ban to include outdoor public areas like plazas and public events, for example the farmers' market, along with outdoor dining areas, new multi-family residences, and existing multi-family units that are newly leased or rented after the ordinance takes effect. In addition, smoking will be banned within 25 feet of building entries and windows.

While many speakers at the public hearing were in favor of the ban, one fellow spoke up about potential intrusion into people's rights.

Once the new rules are in force, the city's Code Enforcement Officer will handle complaints. The new ordinance will become effective 30 days after its official adoption slated for Nov. 14, meaning expanded regulations will be applicable as of mid-December. The new rules don't apply to e-cigarettes.

City Council members discussed the matter saying it's a balancing situation. Acknowledging that quitting smoking is difficult, Councilmember Brandt Andersson said it's only banned in situations where it affects other people, as in multi-family housing or outdoor dining. Councilmember Mark Mitchell talked about the role of government, that this is a reasonable compromise that respects the rights of all citizens.

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

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