

ROBBINSDALE CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2017
COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM
6:15 P.M. CITY HALL

1. The work session was called to order by Mayor Pro Tem Blonigan 6:15 p.m.
2. Councilmembers Present: Selman, Backen, Mayor Murphy, Rogan, Mayor Pro Tem Blonigan

Staff Present: Marcia Glick, City Manager; Tom Marshall, City Clerk, John Tingley, Assistant to City Manager.

DISCUSSION: Receive feedback from licensed tobacco vendors about proposed regulations intended to reduce youth access to tobacco.

3. Mayor Pro Tem Blonigan opened the meeting and thanked the vendors who came to listen and speak to Council.
4. Anton Marouf, 4180 Lakeland Ave. N., Robbinsdale: stated that he believes if Robbinsdale makes it illegal to sell flavored tobacco, many of his customers who also buy other items in addition to tobacco, will go to a store a couple blocks away in a neighboring city. He estimated that 30-40% of his sales are from tobacco products, mostly cigarettes. He is willing to go along with the proposed changes if they applied to all cities.
5. Member Rogan inquired how much his total sales is not menthol tobacco products and stated that the city is not looking to ban menthol products at this time.
6. Mr. Marouf stated about 10% of his total sales is from non-menthol flavored tobacco products but that 10% still brings in customers who buy pop and chips.
7. Yassar Abdelrahman, 4001 W. Broadway, Robbinsdale: stated he agreed with the previous speaker and added that he pays over \$12,000 annually in state and local taxes and has never had any violations. He went on to state his beliefs that if people can vote and fight in a war, they should be able to choose for themselves to use tobacco or not.
8. Mayor Murphy explained the origins of the City's effort started with littering from single wrapped cigars that were ending up in the streets of downtown, and residents yards and the easy access to youth through flavors and eye-level colored wrappers in stores.
9. Cap O'Rourke, 5816 10th Ave. S. Minneapolis: explained on behalf of his client, The Vapor Bunker (4066 Lakeland Ave S. Robbinsdale) that vaping might be significantly better for you than cigarettes. He provided information about the benefits of vaping as a harm reduction method and refuted data from a study done by Clearway Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Health on youth tobacco use. He argued that youth tobacco

use continues to drop therefore making the case that vaping is a gateway to smoking moot.

10. Tom Briant, 15560 Boulder Pointe Rd. Eden Prairie: On behalf of the National Association of Tobacco Outlets Inc., argued that licensed Robbinsdale tobacco vendors have a 98.3% compliance rate in terms of not selling to minors. Raising the legal age to purchase tobacco to 21 does not stop youth from getting their hands on tobacco products as 79% of youth recently said they get tobacco from social sources. Raising the legal age would only push tobacco use underground further among youth he argues. Banning flavors would hurt tobacco vendors as they are just catering to preference and compared selling pineapple flavored tobacco to pineapple flavored vodka.
11. Member Selman asked if the vendors displayed tobacco products at kid level.
12. Numerous vendors stated they did but would be willing to move the displays.
13. Member Blonigan thanked the vendors and encouraged the vendors and public to attend the scheduled tobacco public hearing on Tuesday, September 26th at 7:00 p.m. He encouraged the tobacco vendors and the public to send emails and written material to Council.

ADJOURNMENT

14. Mayor Pro Tem Blonigan adjourned the work session at 7:00 p.m.


John Tingley, Recorder
William A. Blonigan, Mayor Pro Tem