

## Council hears presentations on tobacco products, meeting webcasts

By Jeanne Davant

Parents, beware. The new tobacco products your son or daughter may have told you about aren't as harmless as they are portrayed.

Products like hookah and e-cigarettes are trendy and alluring to young people, Joy Clark of the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment told the Manitou Springs City Council at a work session Tuesday.

But those products may well be even worse than regular cigarettes.

Clark, who heads the department's tobacco education program, said hookah, a water pipe which can have multiple stems for smoking flavored tobacco, originated in ancient cultures.

"It was not until the 20th century that they started manipulating the tobacco products," adding flavorings like chocolate and watermelon, Clark said.

The dangers of hookah use include the possible spread of tuberculosis and herpes via shared mouthpieces, as well as the toxic chemicals in the smoke.

Tobacco smoke contains nearly 5,000 chemicals, 70 of which have been linked to cancer, Clark said, and an hourlong session with a hookah pipe can deliver as much smoke as 200 cigarettes.

The charcoal lumps that are placed on top of the tobacco product to heat it also emit toxic chemicals, she said.

The dozen or so hookah bars in El Paso County are supposed to card users when they buy the tobacco and are not allowed to sell it to those under 18. The health department periodically investigates those establishments.

E-cigarettes, also called nicotine delivery devices, are marketed as smoking cessation tools.

The battery-operated devices, which look like filtered cigarettes, contain liquid nicotine that can be delivered in various doses and emit a vapor that looks like smoke.

One of the chemicals used to produce the vapor is diethylene glycol, a toxin that is used in antifreeze.

"We don't know the extent of the harm," Clark said. But she is concerned that overdoses could occur, since liquid nicotine can be absorbed through the skin.

"A child could ingest it or get it on their hands," she said.

"One of our concerns is that people will use these to get around the Clean Indoor Act," Clark said. Restaurant owners often don't know what to do when patrons pull out an e-cigarette. She said some municipalities are banning their use in restaurants by defining e-cigarettes as smoking.

Clark said parents should be aware that products like these are constantly coming onto the market and are sold at places where young people congregate, such as mall kiosks.

The health department is trying to counteract their use through presentations in the schools.

### Council, live online?

Also Tuesday, Council heard a request from web developer Dan Smith, who proposed live streaming of Council meetings on a community Web site he is building.

Smith said he would use a webcam to stream the meetings through uStream and record them for later playback.

"It could be a way of getting people engaged," Smith said. "It can be embedded on the city Web site." He said he would show Council some samples of the webcasts before they would go live.

Council members were intrigued but concerned about legal aspects of the project.

"What's to prevent somebody from jiggering with this and having things coming out of our mouths that we didn't say?" Mayor Marc Snyder said.

Councilman Rick Barry said he was opposed to uStream's inclusion of ads that would precede and pop up during the webcasts.

"We have no control over the advertising," he noted.

Council agreed to view samples, and Snyder will ask City Attorney Jeff Parker for his opinion on potential legal issues.

Also discussed at Tuesday's meeting was the role of Council members as liaisons to boards and commissions.

Mayor Pro Tern Aimee Cox presented a draft document outlining a code of conduct, and Councilwoman Ingrid Richter suggested surveying boards and commissions on their needs and expectations.

Snyder and City Clerk Donna Kast will talk with department heads and survey other city clerks in the state on liaison policies.

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