

## **Council hopes ordinances help discourage youth tobacco use**

**By Anthony Welch**

Manitou Springs City Council is doing its part to join Manitou Springs High School students in rallying against teenage tobacco use.

Council approved two ordinances related to the matter Tuesday at its meeting. One establishes licensing and regulating procedures for businesses selling non-cigarette tobacco products, which includes chewing tobacco, spitless tobacco, tobacco strips, orbs, sticks, hookah and electronic cigarettes.

Businesses selling tobacco products would have to pay a fee for licensing. The amount of the fee would be decided on by Council at a later date. The ordinance goes into effect Jan. 1, 2012.

The second ordinance establishes procedures for preventing youth access to tobacco products. It prohibits the sale of tobacco products from a vending machine and provides for fines to be issued for violations, according to City Attorney Jeff Parker. Both ordinances would apply to seven businesses currently selling tobacco products in Manitou Springs.

Laurie Wood and Justin Armour, of Partners for Healthy Choices, were on hand with a group of students who have been working on an anti-tobacco campaign with the El Paso County Public Health's Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership.

"I'm so proud of this particular group, who worked over a year and stepped up voluntarily because they wanted to do something about tobacco use and their peers," Wood said.

Council viewed a short film created by MSHS students, where they endorsed not using tobacco products. Joy Clark, with the Tobacco Education Program, said studies found that 28 percent of MSHS seniors use tobacco products. Nine percent are heavy users, Clark added.

Fountain City Council passed a similar ordinance in early October, becoming one of the first communities in Colorado to pass a tobacco licensing ordinance, Clark said. Tobacco retailer licensing is an effective method to help reduce youth access to tobacco products and hold retailers accountable for selling tobacco products to minors, she added.

"Colorado is one of only eight states that do not require retailers of tobacco products to be licensed. Currently, it is difficult to know who how is actually selling tobacco products and where," Clark said. "In most communities, the retailers who are selling tobacco products are fairly clear."

A 2008 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey found that six out of 10 Colorado high school students attempting to purchase cigarettes were successful, according to Clark.

"I realized that I complained about tobacco use every single day to my friends," student Rebecca Triplett said to Council. "I thought about everyday how I didn't have a say in these issues. I support this ordinance, because if tobacco isn't worth my time to complain, why should it be yours?"

Mayor Marc Snyder was impressed with the students' efforts and felt it was good to attack the issue of tobacco use at that particular age groups.

"What I've seen is addictions that are acquired when you're a teenager carry on when you're an adult," he said.

Councilman Matt Carpenter was in favor of the ordinances but was concerned that the City had to spend, what he said, was \$5,000 on attorney fees for the ordinances. He questioned if the county could somehow help the City recoup these costs.

"It's an awesome program, but somebody has to pay for it," Carpenter said.

Clark said her program was grant funded and she wasn't sure if the county could pitch in otherwise. Parker wasn't sure what the total bill for his services was, but said a lot of work went into the ordinances.

"We had some serious concerns with the legality of these regulations," he said. "We did our best to make sure you don't get sued over this."

Councilman Michael Gerbig wanted to know what the cost would be to administer and enforce the ordinances. No exact number had been talked about yet, as Council would decide fees at a later date. However, Deputy Finance Director Rebecca Davis informed Council that the cost of administering a similar ordinance for the City of Fountain was around \$143 per store. And that same number was the fee that city was charging businesses.

Councilman Ed Klingman supported the ordinances, but it (said?) the ordinances were redundant to an extent.

"I'm in full agreement that tobacco ruins quality of lives. We have laws on the books that already protect these children from buying these products," he said. "To add more laws on top of this and levy fees on small business, the retailers don't really need an extra tax."

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