

Medway Board of Health passes tobacco, concussion regs

By Zachary Comeau, Daily News Staff

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MEDWAY - A series of tobacco regulations that include restricting the sale of tobacco products to anyone under 21 years old will take effect next month.

At Monday's meeting, the Board of Health passed regulations that further restrict the sales of tobacco and nicotine delivery products in town.

The board also closed its public hearing involving head injuries and concussions in youth sports.

The tobacco regulations also prohibit the sale of blunt wraps, the use of tobacco product vending machines and restrict the sales of single cigars unless they are sold for \$2.50 or more.

According to Health Agent Stephanie Bacon, the board wanted to raise the price of individual cigars to \$7.50, but after several public comments, the board decreased the price to \$2.50.

Some stores sell single cigars, some flavored, at less than \$1, she said.

"If some vendor was to sell to underage kids, the pricing is such that hopefully kids wouldn't be able to afford it," Bacon said, adding that the town conducts sting operations to ensure compliance, but "only every so often."

The regulations also prohibit the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies.

Last month, the board approved another set of regulations that keep the town's tobacco laws up to date with state law, including some that date back to 2000 and are not in line with the Smoke-Free Workplace state law enacted in 2004.

Both sets of regulations, however, included language that restricts the sale or access to tobacco products to anyone younger than 21. Both sets of regulations will go into effect Sept. 15.

The board also closed the public hearing and approved regulations involving head injuries and concussions in youth sports.

At a Board of Health public hearing last month, several youth sports coaches and organizers expressed their concerns that the proposed regulations would result in liabilities for volunteers and would deter them from donating their time.

The first draft of the regulations proposed fines for coaches and volunteers if a player suffered a concussion but was allowed to play.

Several youth sports coaches and volunteers who attended the meeting said many of them have no experience or background in head trauma, so they wouldn't know if a player had been concussed.

Earlier this month, the board decided to remove the language about the fines and any further liability that may be placed on the largely volunteer youth sports staff.

Instead, coaches are only required to complete the Center for Disease Control's "Heads Up Online Training Course."

Also, youth sports athletes must provide written approval from a medical professional that they are symptom-free before they return to the playing field.

"I think between the coaches and the board working together, we totally met our goal," Bacon said. "We just want coaches to be more educated, and that will increase safety out in the field."

The regulations will go into effect on Oct. 15.

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