

Supervisors poised to extend e-cigarette ban

By Anne Ternus-Bellamy From page A1 | July 30, 2015

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WOODLAND — Yolo County supervisors appear poised to ban the use of e-cigarettes in most public places, following in the footsteps of the cities of Davis and Woodland, which already have done so.

Supervisors on Tuesday voted 4-1 to direct staff to develop a policy that would prohibit the use of electronic nicotine delivery devices in places where state law prohibits the use of traditional cigarettes, including workplaces, restaurants and bars.

The ban would apply to all unincorporated areas of the county.

The vote came following a presentation by Steve Jensen of the county's Health & Human Services Agency, who said Yolo County — as well as the rest of the state — is sliding backwards in the fight against smoking.

“California has the lowest youth smoking rate in the nation and the second-lowest adult smoking rate,” Jensen said. “Unfortunately, we are beginning to lose ground and the reason we are losing ground is because of the introduction of this new technology called electronic cigarettes.”

Jensen said the youth smoking rate in Yolo County — once the lowest in the state — “has gone up threefold since the introduction of electronic cigarettes.”

“And the majority of these users ... have never even tried traditional cigarettes,” Jensen added. “They’re just jumping straight to electronic cigarette sampling.”

The reason why, he said, lies in the products themselves, and the way they are marketed to youths through the use of flavoring.

“Most of the flavors are sweet,” Jensen said. “They are strawberry- and blueberry-flavored, caramel flavors that have pictures of ice cream sundaes on them.

“What we know is that the adults who smoke are not using electronic cigarettes because adults don’t go for these flavors. The youth and the young adults — 18 to 24 years old — are the ones attracted to those flavors.”

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration banned candy- and fruit-flavored cigarettes back in 2009 specifically because of their appeal to youths. Several local jurisdictions have since extended that ban to all tobacco products, including Santa Clara County and the city of Hayward, Jensen said.

At least two Yolo County supervisors indicated some willingness to go that far in Yolo County as well.

“I’m most concerned about the marketing to children,” said Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis. “We’re not talking about somebody who smokes cigarettes and then shifts to e-cigarettes. ... We’re talking about somebody who potentially might never smoke.

“I personally would favor this and the most restrictive ordinance that we could write consistent with the law,” Provenza added.

Supervisor Don Saylor, also of Davis, said he would be interested in “some sort of regulation on the marketing and sale of flavored tobacco products” as well.

Even without such a ban, Jensen said including e-cigarettes in the county’s existing anti-smoking regulations would serve two purposes — protecting more people from secondhand vapor and sending a message, especially to young people, that the products are not safe.