



September 1, 2006

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Fort Collins Air Quality Advisory Board
RE: Proposed smoking ordinance changes

Dear Mayor and members of City Council:

On August 22, 2006, the Fort Collins Air Quality Advisory Board took up the issue of recent proposed changes to our City's smoking ordinance. Several changes would make Fort Collins consistent with Colorado law, while other proposals would allow a new class of indoor public smoking establishment.

Our board strongly believes that allowing the operation of indoor hookah bars (a new class of public smoking establishment) runs counter to our public health goals as well as contrary to the intent of our present policy on smoking.

The Air Quality Advisory Board therefore unanimously passed the following resolution:

"Due to the demonstrable health effects of secondhand smoke, the Air Quality Advisory Board recommends that City Council adhere to the original intent (of the 2002 Smoke-free Fort Collins law) by prohibiting smoking in all indoor public places.

The Board further recommend that City Code conform to Colorado state law, that the City use "cigarette butt receptacles" rather than "ash trays" if needed within the 20' no smoking perimeter so as not to send the message that smoking is allowed in these areas, and that the City should not grant certain businesses exclusive rights (to operate smoking lounges) and thereby limit free trade."

Our Board discussion explored important additional points:

- No one can predict the next teen fad. Teens between 18 and 21 are allowed to smoke but not drink, and are thus a likely targeted group for hookah bars.
- Presently, Fort Collins has just two hookah bars, mere months old; both opened on speculation without any City assurance they would be allowed to operate permanently. If the future found us with many more, prohibiting more of them at a later date will prove more difficult, more unfair, and more economically disruptive.
- For the past several decades, our society has been working to reduce the number of smokers, with an emphasis on keeping our kids from getting hooked. The licensing of businesses that could not stay in business except by promoting and providing indoor public smoking runs contrary to these goals.
- Colorado's health departments are using tobacco settlement monies to fund local programs to reduce smoking, and especially youth taking up smoking. The licensing and creation of a new class of public indoor smoking establishment runs contrary to our own health departments' efforts.

I would be happy to answer any questions or requests relating to our Board's unanimous recommendation to limit new indoor public smoking establishments.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Levine, Chairman 970.493.6341