

Atchison park areas off limits to tobacco

(KAIR)--The use of tobacco products becomes off limits in areas of Atchison Parks, with the divided decision made by the Atchison City Commission in order to secure \$30,000 in grant funding.

The decision to bar tobacco products, including non-tobacco related electronic smoking equipment, was approved on a 3-2 vote Tuesday.

The approval guarantees the receipt of the funds through the Pathways to a Healthy Kansas Grant, administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas.

Andrea Clements, Executive Director of the healthy living organization Live Well Live Atchison assured commissioners that approval was certain following concerns voiced by Commissioner Charlie Perdue. "I've spoken with the Pathways director over this initiative, and if this is passed, then the funding would be released to the city."

Nonetheless, Perdue voted against the measure, as did Commissioner David Butler.

Perdue questioned the City's role in keeping children free from tobacco, while Butler opposed the ordinance's lack of enforcement. "I don't think it's our job to, that should be the parents, the ones that take them there," Perdue stated. "To me, this is just kind of a bad ordinance, right at this particular point," Butler said. "I just don't think we need to pass bad ordinances. We can't enforce it, there's no way we can make people comply with this. It just doesn't make sense."

However, City Attorney Bob Campbell, during the meeting, said the policy could be handled as a class C misdemeanor, with a maximum fine of \$500.

Mayor Allen Reavis, who opposed a similar measure in the past, voiced his support, saying the fact that the ordinance only prohibits tobacco use within 25 feet of playground equipment made him comfortable in voting yes.

"What I'd like to say is, the last time we talked about this it was going to be throughout all the parks. I like this proposal because it just says around those playground areas, no smoking. I think this ordinance is a lot more fair...I will support this."

The \$30,000, when received, will be applied to the overall more than \$151,000 price tag for an inclusive playground to be constructed at Jackson Park.

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