

Tobacco 21 legislation seems to be working

First compliance checks find no violations

Results are in from the recent Tobacco 21 compliance check visits to local tobacco and vape shops. Out of 29 shops visited around the county from June 12 through Aug. 12, none were found to be selling to young people.

Tobacco 21 legislation went into effect earlier this year, making it illegal to sell tobacco, nicotine and vaping products to anyone under the age of 21. Previously, the legal age to buy these products had been 18, and these compliance checks continue with distinct compliance result numbers under the longstanding ATUPA program, named after the Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act.

"These compliance check results for Tobacco 21 are good news," said County Executive MaryEllen Odell, who supported the new legislation. "The Prevention Council of Putnam and our health department have done a good job of educating the public, legislators and now retail establishments. Obviously, the word has been spread and stores are following the law. Vaping has become a serious problem in our schools. This should help reduce that."

Health Commissioner Dr. Michael J. Neshelwart added that "many youths think vape products are a safe alternative to traditional cigarettes, but nothing can be further from the truth."

"There are a host of harmful ingredients, some of which are carcinogenic, in electronic cigarettes," he said. "Our staff have worked closely supervising local youth visits to Putnam's retail establishments to see if they would be able to purchase these items. We

have had positive results with respect to enforcement of this much needed public health law."

Executive director of The Prevention Council of Putnam, Kristin McConnell, thanked the health department for its enforcement efforts.

"We have worked together to educate around this Tobacco 21 for some time. But having a law on the books is just the first step," she said. "Without enforcement, there is no real health benefit."

For more than 20 years, the health department has coordinated youth visits to retail establishments to ensure tobacco products were not being sold to minors under 18, through ATUPA. Now with the sponsorship of the Prevention Council of Putnam, the compliance check program has been expanded and includes enforcement of Tobacco 21, which passed the Putnam legislature late last year. Statewide Tobacco 21 recently passed in Albany and will go into effect on Nov. 13.

The Prevention Council of Putnam County is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1985. Its mission is to promote education and awareness related to substance use disorders and problem gambling to the residents of Putnam County and the surrounding area, by providing up-to-date information and services related to prevention, treatment and recovery.

Article courtesy of the Putnam County Department of Health



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Residents will be able to get dog licenses online

BY BOB DUMAS
EDITOR

It's about to get a little easier for dog owners in the town of Carmel to license their pets.

At the Town Board's Sept. 4 meeting, town attorney Greg Folchetti explained that the process is similar to the one in which residents can pay their taxes online with a credit card.

"It is pretty much a mirror of the payment process we have for the receiver of taxes," he said.

Folchetti said the town will pay about \$800 for the service in the first year, and then \$300 for maintenance and support in the second of a three-year agreement. Residents who use the service will pay a convenience fee of 2.45 percent with a minimum payment of \$1.75.

"It saves them a trip to Town Hall, and the paperwork is streamlined and expedited" Folchetti told the board. "It's a boiler plate agreement. The only change we can make is the choice of law provisions so if there is a dispute, it's litigated in New York State."

Folchetti noted that the service is something that would help ease the workload on the town clerk's office.

Training is included in the cost of the program, Folchetti said, via a 30-minute webinar.

"I don't think it's very complicated," he said.

"I think it's a great idea," added Supervisor Ken Schmitt. "The more services we can provide online the better. It definitely saves them a trip to Town Hall."

Schmitt estimated there are about 8,000 dogs in town.

"I think there are 2,000 on my street alone," he laughed. "But you have to license them, and this makes it easier."

Jonathan Schneider said it is important for the town to keep up with 21st century technology.

"They can pay their tax bills online and now [dog licenses]," he said. "So, we are catching up with the times."