

**Worcester Board of Health Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Meeting Held at 25 Meade St. Room 109
Monday, January 29, 2024
6:30 pm
Minutes by Aidan Giasson**

Welcome and Introductions

Board Members Present: Interim Chair Frances Anthes, Vice Chair Chareese Allen, Gary Rosen, Leopoldo Negrón Cruz

Staff Present: Soloe Dennis, Director of DPH and CMRPHA; Ian Wong, Deputy Director of DPH; Cherry Tangri, Tobacco Prevention Specialist

Guests Present: Patrick Harrington, Worcester Police Officer; Alex Laracelle, Worcester Police Officer; Henry Schwan, Worcester Telegram & Gazette; Sean Murray, Attorney at Murray & Murray, LLP; Mashriq Said, Owner of Smoke and Talk 2

Tobacco Violation Hearing

1. Smoke and Talk 2, 834 Main Street

On January 17th, 2024, Worcester Division of Public Health in collaboration with Worcester Police Department (WPD) did a retail compliance inspection at Smoke and Talk 2 at 834 Main Street. First, they sent in an undercover officer who was able to purchase illegal flavored vape products, menthol cigarettes from South Carolina, and Class D: substance marijuana.

After the undercover officer's purchase, the neighborhood response team, Officer Harrington, and Cherry Tangri went into the store to inspect and found menthol cigarettes in a hidden compartment, vape products in a garage beyond the storage room, and blunt wraps. After these findings, Ms. Tangri issued the store a \$5000 fine because this was their third violation as well as another \$300 fine for violating the local regulation of selling blunt wraps.

This store opened in November of 2021 and has a tobacco license restricting the entry of anyone under 21 years of age. Since opening the store, the store has been fined for violating the law in March 2022, July 2022, and July 2023 (when the license was suspended by board of health). Ms. Tangri emphasized that the Division has sent out multiple educational communications to retailers during this period, so they should be aware of what they can and cannot sell.

Officer Patrick Harrington stated that over the last year the WPD has received complaints from Worcester Public School administrators along with several parents in regards to juveniles on school grounds being found in possession of flavored vapes, which are illegal in the State of Massachusetts. These complaints are connected to general concerns in the city. In addition to what was sold to the officer, they also found Class C: substance of illegal mushrooms and marijuana infused chocolate bars on the premises.

Speaking for his client, Attorney Sean Murray stated that he understands that the violations occurred, but his client is 23 years old, lives with his mother and two younger siblings and supports his family. Attorney Murray highlighted that he was not the actual clerk working on that particular day though it is



still his responsibility. The client did not speak because of the potential of a accompanying criminal case associated with this violation.

Gary Rosen moved for the BOH to revoke the permit of Smoke and Talk 2 at 834 Main in the City of Worcester. Chareese Allen seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Adjournment

Gary Rosen moved to adjourn the meeting and Leopoldo Negrón Cruz seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:07