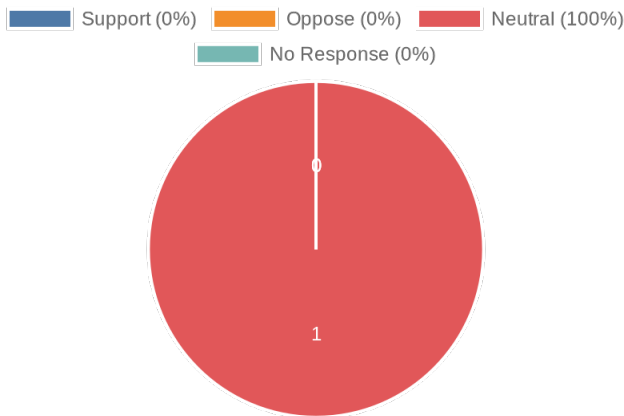


Agenda Item: eComments for 1. 25-0913 Consideration of a proposed ordinance to amend various sections of Title 24 (Zoning) to regulate locations of cigarette, tobacco and electronic vaping device sales businesses

Overall Sentiment



Andrew Meindl

Location:

Submitted At: 9:21pm 07-05-25

The city is literally drawing a line around its neighbors, and in this case, politicians pulled the “our neighbors are doing it” excuse off the shelf to justify what those in power already wanted.

No one wants vape or tobacco shops next to schools or daycares, of course. But this ordinance goes far beyond that. It’s not about health; it’s about virtue signaling, targeting certain types of businesses and people while curating an image.

From 2020–2021, alcohol caused over 178,000 deaths per year in the U.S. (CDC, 2024). Vaping? Just 1 death was reported from April 2022 to March 2023, likely a suicide, not lung injury (CDC, 2023). I believe no confirmed cases of popcorn lung have been directly linked to vaping (American Lung Association, 2022).

Meanwhile, Wauwatosa continues to permit bars and breweries near homes, parks, and schools without question. The city also rejected a proposal to decriminalize THC possession, while cracking down on vape shops that cause far fewer harms.

And let’s not forget: after years of the Mayor claiming the office was powerless, he suddenly pulled out a veto threat to block a beer license at a gas station, followed magically by an ordinance banning beer sales at gas stations altogether. Apparently, when conservative moral zoning is on the table, the power returns.

This isn’t public health policy. It’s performative zoning, designed to gain political clout by punishing the wrong targets and distracting residents during a budget crisis, while maintaining the illusion of “progressivism” that, in truth, increasingly resembles cultural conservatism. It reinforces a carefully curated, hyper-affluent, homogenized white suburb, a project years in the making, that now waves various flags and posts virtuous yard signs not to create equity, but simply to feel good about itself.

Sad.

APA Citations:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Deaths from excessive alcohol use — United States, 2020–2021. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 73(8), 154–161. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7308a1>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, June 30). E-cigarette exposure cases reported to poison centers—United States, April 2022–March 2023. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 72(25), 694–699. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7225a5.htm>

American Lung Association. (2022). Popcorn lung and vaping. <https://www.lung.org/blog/popcorn-lung-and-e-cigarettes>