

MANHATTAN BEACH

City bans sale of vaping products

by David Rosenfeld

Selling electronic cigarettes and other vaping products is now illegal in Manhattan Beach.

The City Council passed an urgency ordinance this week immediately banning sales of all vaping products, joining several other cities in the region as the number of deaths and lung injuries associated with the habit — popular among young people — continues rising nationally.

“The community itself overwhelmingly understands why we need a vape ban,” Councilmember Richard Montgomery said at the Tuesday, Nov. 5, meeting. “I’m sympathetic to the small business owners themselves, but our responsibility is citywide.”

Businesses that sell e-cigarettes will have 10 days to apply for a hardship extension, at which time the city will give them a certain amount of time to sell their remaining inventory. Exactly how much of an extension shops might receive will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

There are currently 18 retailers in Manhattan Beach that sell tobacco products and vapes, according to a city staff report.

One of those is the MB Smoke Shop. Feras Adamo, owner of the shop for the past five years, said that up to 60% of his products are vapor-related.

“All of my customers are adults,” Adamo said. “We don’t have kids here. They don’t get it here. They go to smoke shops in other cities. They have people buy

it for them or they go online.

“This is not going to fix the problem,” he added. “If we stop selling to adults what does that have to do with kids?”

Adamo said he would apply for the hardship extension but did not know whether he would stay in business at his Manhattan Beach location given the high price he pays in rent.

“Smokers switched to vaping,” Adamo said. “Our normal customers vape now.”

The council on Tuesday was also expected to take up a proposed ban on selling all flavored tobacco products and possibly the sale of tobacco products in general. But the panel decided to put that decision off to another day.

Councilmember Suzanne Hadley, the only dissenting vote on the vape sales ban, said if the panel’s reasoning was to reduce the use among young people, the prohibition just did not make sense and was not going to work. The school district, she said, could do more.

“The school can enforce the ban on vaping any day of the week,” Hadley said. “Do you want to know how to make a difference at the high school? You have a drug sniffing dog there every day. If we want to prevent students from vaping at the high school, that’s how we do it.”

There have been 37 deaths among 1,888 lung injuries associated with e-cigarettes, as of Oct. 29, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Those injuries have been reported in every state but Alaska.

The federal agency also reports that the



Manhattan Beach adopted an urgency ordinance banning the sale of vaping products for the 18 retailers who sell them. Businesses have 10 days to apply for a hardship extension. (AP file photo)

majority of the injuries and deaths occurred in people who used vape products containing THC, the main psychoactive chemical in marijuana.

A 2018-2019 California Healthy Kids Survey found that 31% of Manhattan Beach Unified School District 11th graders reported using electronic cigarettes or other vaping devices within the last 30 days.

Manhattan Beach first banned smoking and vaping in all public places in 2014. Exceptions were carved out for smoking or vaping in moving vehicles, hotel rooms, and residential properties with two or fewer units. The city also bans the sale of flavored tobacco products, except for mint,

menthol, spearmint and wintergreen.

While several other cities and counties have recently taken action against vaping and smoking products, Manhattan Beach became one of only a few to outright ban sales.

Beverly Hills recently passed a prohibition on the sale of all tobacco-related products, which takes effect Jan. 1, 2021. Redondo Beach has also banned the sale of flavored tobacco products, effective in a year, along with a general smoking ban in public. And Hermosa Beach has banned the sale of flavored tobacco and vape products for retailers that allow customers under the age of 21.