

Smoking Ban Ballot Question to be Introduced Tuesday

Friday, 28 June 2013

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/130628.boro_smoking_ordinance.mp3{/audio}

Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Kodiak voters may be asked to decide whether or not to allow smoking in public places this fall. Last night the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly met for a work session and discussed the non-smoking ordinance that, if passed by the assembly, will appear on the October ballot.

Assemblyman Aaron Griffin helped draft the ordinance and said he wanted to base the language on science as much as possible. He said the ordinance might change a certain aspect of how business is conducted within the borough – particularly with enforcement.

“Right now if it was enacted, the basic enforcement says the manager is responsible for active enforcement of this. And that’s pretty much the end of it. Right now anything that we have code violations is done on a complaint base. That is not, to me active means we are working toward making sure that this happens, not waiting for someone to complain about it. And the attorney suggested we specifically add language in there into how we would have the manager do that.”

Assemblyman Tuck Bonney also helped draft the ordinance and said it’s about time Kodiak joined the 21st century in terms of non-smoking. Since the ordinance was first brought up in May, some people have raised the concern that banning smoking would decrease business at bars. Bonney said he disagreed.

“The other thing with this is it includes everybody, including the Legion by the way it’s written. So it’s not going to take business away because there’s not going to be any place to smoke. So I don’t think there will be any loss because it’s right across the board fair. There’s no exceptions, if you have a liquor license, you can’t smoke. So when people say they’ll lose business I can’t agree with that.”

The ordinance before the assembly will only place it on the fall

ballot, not enact it into law. Bonney said the assembly should pass it so the ultimate decision can be made by Kodiak's residents.

Assemblywoman Louise Stutes said she felt it would still be too much government say in how a business can operate.

"As an ex business owner, of a liquor license, I have a real hard time with it. We, or they, now, not me, are regulated by a multitude of government agencies about what they can and cannot do. I have never, as a bar owner, pull someone off the street or prevent someone from leaving because there was too much smoke. I mean that's a choice they're making, and when you say across the board it's not going to affect business, you're kidding yourself. I'm serious. People are going to stay home."

The ordinance will receive a few tweaks, but is scheduled to visit the assembly for a first reading during its next meeting on July 2. In order to appear on the October ballot, the assembly must pass an ordinance by August 9.