

City of New Bedford to hold a Public Hearing for the Regulation for Synthetic Drugs

Mayor Jon Mitchell and other leaders announced that the City of New Bedford is moving toward strict new regulations that prohibit the possession, sale, manufacture or distribution of any synthetic drug within city limits. Synthetic drugs are also commonly referred to as “Spice”, “K2”, “bath salts” and “potpourri” among other names and have been linked to serious adverse physical effects including death when ingested or inhaled. City leaders agree that these drugs pose a threat to health, safety, and welfare of city residents.

City Councilors, New Bedford Health Director Dr. Brenda Weis, New Bedford Police Chief Joseph Cordeiro and Board of Health member and emergency room physician, Craig Longo, joined the Mayor in announcing the details of the new Board of Health regulations at a press conference held in City Hall earlier today.

“We are united on this issue and with the adoption and implementation of these new regulations, our City is taking an important step forward in our collaborative efforts to address the problem of synthetic drugs by eliminating them from convenience stores and gas stations,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

Mayor Mitchell praised the entire City Council for its support of his budget proposal to bolster enforcement staff at the City’s Health Department. Councilor At-Large Ian Abreu and Ward 2 Councilor Steve Martins have advocated for a ban of products containing synthetic drugs.

“This is a shining example that when both bodies of local

government, various citywide departments, and the private sector come together, we can accomplish anything. The once legalized selling of poisonous synthetic drugs will no longer have a place in our city, thanks to our combined collaborative efforts. Our children and residents deserve to live in a drug-free community, and this is a tremendous step in the right direction," said Councilor Abreu.

"This is a no-brainer. These harmful drugs don't belong in our community and that's why I fully support the new Board of Health regulation to ban them as well as increased funding in the Health Department to help with enforcement, said Councilor Martins.

Cities and towns have found it difficult to effectively prohibit synthetic drugs in their communities because manufacturers often alter their chemical composition to circumvent these prohibitions. The new New Bedford regulations seek to prohibit any substance irrespective of exact chemical structure that produces certain physiological effects. This improved approach has much better prospects for enforcement according to public health experts.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Health there have been reports of teens and young adults having serious adverse reactions to the use of synthetic stimulants and synthetic marijuana. Many people, who have used these drugs, present at hospital emergency rooms with impaired perception, racing heart, vomiting, reduced motor control, disorientation, extreme paranoia, violent behavior and psychosis. The long-term physical and psychological effects of using these drugs are not yet known.

Synthetic marijuana is sold in some small variety stores, gas stations and over the internet. These drugs have many different labels and come in colorful foil or cellophane packages often labeled "not for human consumption". These synthetic stimulants have not been approved by the Food and

Drug Administration for human consumption or for medical use.

The new regulations will be considered at a public meeting of the Board of Health slated for Thursday, August 11, 2016 at 6PM at the Health Department Office, 1213 Purchase Street. Copies of the Draft Regulation can be found on the Health Department website (<http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/health-department/>) or at the Health Department located at 1213 Purchase Street, New Bedford, MA 02740 between the hours of 8:00AM and 4:00PM, Monday–Friday.

The New Bedford Board of Health members include Patricia L. Andrade, M.D., Chairperson; Athena Xifaras, M.D.; and Craig Longo, M.D.