

**BENTON COUNTY ORDINANCE # 298**

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An ordinance relating to the sale, possession, and use of tobacco, tobacco products, and tobacco related devices in the county and to reduce the illegal sale, possession, and use of such items to and by minors.

The County Board of Benton County Ordains:

**Section 100. Purpose.** This ordinance shall be intended to regulate the sale, possession, and use of tobacco, tobacco products, and tobacco related devices for the purpose of enforcing existing laws, to protect minors against the serious effects associated with the illegal use of tobacco, tobacco products, and tobacco related devices, and to further the official public policy of the State of Minnesota in regard to preventing young people from starting to smoke as stated in Minnesota Statute 144.391.

**Section 200. Definitions and Interpretations.** Except as may otherwise be provided or clearly implied by context, all terms shall be given their commonly accepted definitions. The singular shall include the plural and the plural shall include the singular. The masculine shall include the feminine and neuter, and vice-versa. The term "shall" means mandatory and the term "may" means permissive. The following terms shall have the definitions given to them:

**Subd. 1 Tobacco or Tobacco Products.** "Tobacco" or "Tobacco Products" shall mean any substance or item containing tobacco leaf, including but not limited to, cigarettes; cigars; pipe tobacco; snuff; fine cut or other chewing tobacco; cheroots; stogies; perique; granulated, plug cut, crimp cut, ready-rubbed, and other smoking tobacco; snuff flowers, cavendish; shorts; plug and twist tobaccos; dipping tobaccos; refuse scraps, clippings, cuttings and sweepings of tobacco; and other kinds and forms of tobacco leaf prepared in such manner as to be suitable for chewing, sniffing or smoking.

**Subd. 2 Tobacco Related Devices.** "Tobacco related devices" shall mean any tobacco product as well as pipe, rolling papers, or other devices intentionally designed or intended to be used in a manner which enables the chewing, sniffing or smoking of tobacco or tobacco products.

**Subd. 3 Self-Service Merchandising.** "Self-Service Merchandising" shall mean open displays of tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices in any manner where any person shall have access to the tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices, without the assistance or intervention of the licensee or the licensee's employer. The assistance or intervention shall entail the actual physical exchange of

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the tobacco, tobacco product, or tobacco related device between the customer and the licensee or employee. Self-service merchandising shall not include the vending machines.

**Subd. 4 Vending Machine.** "Vending Machine" shall mean any mechanical, electric or electronic, or other type of device which dispenses tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices upon the insertion of money, tokens, or other forms of payment directly into the machine by the person seeking to purchase the tobacco, tobacco product, or tobacco related device.

**Subd. 5 Individually Packaged.** "Individually packaged" shall mean the practice of selling any tobacco or tobacco product wrapped individually for sale. Individually wrapped tobacco and tobacco products shall include, but not be limited to, single cigarette packs, single bags or cans of loose tobacco in any form, and single cans or other packaging of snuff or chewing tobacco. Cartons or other packaging containing more than a single pack or other container as described in this subdivision shall not be considered individually packaged.

**Subd. 6 Loosies.** "Loosies" shall mean the common term used to refer to a single or individually packaged cigarette.

**Subd. 7 Minor.** "Minor" shall mean any natural person who has not yet reached the age of eighteen (18) years.

**Subd. 8 Retail Establishment.** "Retail Establishment" shall mean any place of business where tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices are available for sale to the general public. Retail establishments shall include, but not be limited to grocery stores, convenience stores, and restaurants.

**Subd. 9 Moveable Place of Business.** "Moveable Place of Business" shall refer to any form of business operated out of a truck, van, automobile, or other type of vehicle or transportable shelter and not a fixed address store front or other permanent type of structure authorized for sales transactions.

**Subd. 10 Sale.** A "sale" shall mean any transfer of goods for money, trade, barter or other consideration.

**Subd. 11 Compliance Checks.** "Compliance Checks" shall mean the system the county uses to investigate and ensure that those authorized to sell tobacco, tobacco products, and tobacco related devices are following and complying with the requirements of state law through this ordinance. Compliance checks shall involve the use of minors as authorized by state law through this ordinance. Compliance checks shall also mean the use of minors who attempt to purchase tobacco, tobacco products,

or tobacco related devices for educational, research and training purposes as authorized by State and Federal laws. Compliance checks may also be conducted by other units of government for the purpose of enforcing appropriate Federal, State, or local laws and regulations relating to tobacco, tobacco products, and tobacco related devices.

**Section 300. License.** No person shall sell or offer to sell any tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related device without first having obtained a license to do so from the county, unless located within a town or a home rule charter or statutory city that has retained licensing authority under Minnesota Statutes 461.12, Subdivision 1.

**Subd. 1 Application.** An application for a license to sell tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices shall be made on a form provided by the county. The application shall contain the full name of the applicant, the applicant's residential and business addresses and telephone numbers, the name of the business for which the license is sought and any additional information the county deems necessary. Upon receipt of a completed application, the County Auditor/Treasurer shall forward the application to the County Board for action at its next regularly scheduled board meeting. If the County Auditor/Treasurer shall determine that an application is incomplete, he or she shall return the application with notice of the information necessary to make the application complete.

**Subd. 2 Action.** The County Board may either approve or deny the license, or it may delay action for such reasonable period of time as is necessary to complete any investigation of the application or applicant it deems necessary. If the County Board shall approve the license, the Auditor/Treasurer shall notify the applicant and collect the appropriate fee. The Auditor/Treasurer will then issue the license to the applicant. If the County Board denies the license, the notice of the denial shall be given to the applicant and notice of the applicant's right to appeal the decision. If the denial is the result of information gathered by the Sheriff's Department or the County Attorney, that department shall issue a statement of what was found and if/how it could be corrected in order to apply for a license again at a later date. The statement shall be sent to the applicant, along with the notice of denial. If a license is mistakenly issued to an applicant or license holder, or renewed, it shall be revoked by the Auditor/Treasurer upon discovery that the person, applicant, or license holder was ineligible for license under this section.

**Subd. 3 Term.** Generally licenses issued under this ordinance shall be valid for one calendar year from the date of issue beginning January 1st. Licenses may be issued and granted under this ordinance for a fractional year thereof upon their expiration under another licensing authority, or in the case of a new license application. A license issued for a period of less than one calendar year will expire on December 31 of that year.

**Subd. 4 Revocation or Suspension.** Any license issued under this ordinance may be revoked or suspended as provided in the Violations and Penalties section of this ordinance.

**Subd. 5 Transfers.** All licenses under this ordinance shall be valid only on the premises for which the license was issued and only for the person to whom the license was issued. No transfer of any license to another location or person shall be valid without the prior approval of the County Board.

**Subd. 6 Moveable Place of Business.** No license shall be issued to a moveable place of business. Only fixed location businesses shall be eligible to be licensed under this ordinance.

**Subd. 7 Display.** All licenses shall be posted and displayed in plain view of the general public on the licensee's premises.

**Subd. 8 Renewals.** The renewal of a license issued under this section shall be handled in the same manner as the original application. The request for a renewal shall be made at least thirty (30) days but no more than sixty (60) days before the expiration of the current license. The issuance of a license issued under this ordinance shall be considered a privilege and not an absolute right of the applicant and shall not entitle the holder to an automatic renewal of the license.

**Section 400. Fees.** No license shall be issued under this ordinance until the appropriate license fee shall be paid in full. The fee for a license under this ordinance shall be established by resolution of the County Board. The fee for a license granted for a period of less than one calendar year shall be pro-rated to the nearest full month of its effective date.

**Section 500. Basis for Denial of License.** The following shall be ground for denying the issuance or renewal of a license under this ordinance; however, except as may otherwise be provided by law, the existence of any particular ground for denial does not mean that the county must deny the license. If a license is mistakenly issued or renewed to a person, it shall be revoked upon the discovery that the person was ineligible for the license under this Section.

- A. The applicant is under the age of 18 years.
- B. The applicant has been convicted within the past five years of any violation of a Federal, State or local law, ordinance provision, or other regulation relating to tobacco or tobacco products, or tobacco related devices.
- C. The applicant has had a license to sell tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices revoked within the preceding twelve (12) months of the date of application.

- D. The applicant fails to provide any information required on the application, or provides false or misleading information.
- E. The applicant is prohibited by Federal, State or other local law, ordinance, or other regulation from holding such a license.
- F. Delinquent property tax remains unpaid on the place of business.

**Section 600. Prohibited Sale.** It shall be a violation of this ordinance for any person to sell or offer to sell any tobacco, tobacco product, or tobacco related device:

- A. To any person under the age of eighteen (18) years.
- B. By means of any type of vending machine, except as may otherwise be provided in this ordinance.
- C. By means of self-service methods whereby the customer does not need to make a verbal or written request to an employee of the licensed premises in order to receive the tobacco, tobacco product, or tobacco related device and whereby there is not a physical exchange of the tobacco, tobacco product or tobacco related device between the licensee or the licensee's employee and the customer.
- D. By means of loosies as defined in Section 200 of this ordinance.
- E. Containing opium, morphine, jimson weed, bella donna, strychnos, cocaine, marijuana, or other deleterious, hallucinogenic, toxic or controlled substances except nicotine and other substances found naturally in tobacco or added as part of an otherwise lawful manufacturing process.
- F. By any other means, to any other person, or in any other manner or form prohibited by Federal, State, or other local law, ordinance provision or other regulation.

**Section 700. Vending Machines.** It shall be unlawful for any person licensed under this ordinance to allow the sale of tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices by the means of a vending machine.

**Section 800. Self Service Sales.**

- A. No licensee shall offer for sale single packages of any tobacco products in open displays which are accessible to the public without the intervention of a store employee.

- B. No licensee shall offer for sale cartons and other multipack units through open displays accessible to the public. All tobacco, tobacco products, and tobacco related devices shall either be stored behind a counter or other area not freely accessible to customers, or in a case or other storage unit not left open and accessible to the general public. Any retailer selling tobacco, tobacco products or tobacco related devices at the time this ordinance is adopted shall comply with this Section within ninety (90) days.
- C. The self-service restrictions described in this section shall not apply to retail establishments which derive at least 90% of their revenue from tobacco and tobacco related products.

**Section 900. Responsibility.** All licensees under this ordinance shall be responsible for the actions of their employees in regard to the sale of tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices on the licensed premises, and the sale of such an item by an employee shall be considered a sale by the license holder. Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting the county from also subjecting the clerk to whatever penalties are appropriate under this ordinance, State or Federal law, or other applicable law or regulation.

**Section 1000. Compliance Checks and Inspections.** All licensed premises shall be open to inspection by an authorized county official during regular business hours. From time to time, but at least once per year, the county shall conduct compliance checks by engaging, with the written consent of their parents or guardians, minors over the age of fifteen (15) years but less than eighteen (18) years, to enter the licensed premise to attempt to purchase tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices. Minors used for the purpose of compliance checks shall be trained and supervised by designated county personnel. Minors used for compliance checks shall not be guilty of the unlawful purchase or attempted purchase, nor the unlawful possession of tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices when such items are obtained or attempted to be obtained as part of the compliance check. No minor used in compliance checks shall attempt to use a false identification misrepresenting the minor's age, and all minors lawfully engaged in a compliance check shall answer all questions about the minor's age asked by the licensee or his or her employees and shall produce any identification, if any exists, for which he or she is asked. Nothing in this section shall prohibit compliance checks authorized by State or Federal laws for educational, research, or training purposes, or required for the enforcement of a particular State or Federal law.

**Section 1100. Other Illegal Acts.** Unless otherwise provided, the following acts shall be a violation of this ordinance.

**Subd. 1. Illegal Sales.** It shall be a violation of this ordinance for any person to sell or otherwise provide any tobacco, tobacco product, or tobacco related device to any minor.

**Subd. 2. Illegal Location.** It shall be a violation of this ordinance to sell or provide any tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related device within 350 feet of schools.

**Subd. 3. Illegal Possession.** It shall be a violation of this ordinance for any minor to have in his or her possession any tobacco, tobacco product, or tobacco related device. This subdivision shall not apply to minors lawfully involved in a compliance check.

**Subd. 4. Illegal Use.** It shall be a violation of this ordinance for any minor to smoke, chew, sniff, or otherwise use any tobacco, tobacco product or tobacco related device.

**Subd. 5. Illegal Procurement.** It shall be a violation of this ordinance for any minor to purchase or attempt to purchase or otherwise obtain any tobacco, tobacco product or tobacco related device, and it shall be a violation of this ordinance for any person to purchase or otherwise obtain such items on behalf of a minor. It shall further be a violation for any person to coerce or attempt to coerce a minor to illegally purchase or otherwise obtain for use any tobacco, tobacco product, or tobacco related device. This subdivision shall not apply to minors lawfully involved in a compliance check.

**Subd. 6. Use of False Identification.** It shall be a violation of this ordinance for any minor to attempt to disguise his or her true age by the use of a false form of identification, whether the identification is that of another person or one on which the ages of the person has been modified or tampered with to represent an age older than the actual age of the person.

## **Section 1200. Violations.**

**Subd. 1 Notice.** Upon discovery of a suspected violation, the alleged violator shall be issued, either personally or by mail, a citation that sets forth the alleged violation and which shall inform the alleged violator of his or her right to be heard on the accusation.

**Subd. 2 Hearings.** If a person accused of violating this ordinance so requests, a hearing shall be scheduled, the time and place of which shall be published and provided to the accused violator.

**Subd. 3 Hearing Committee.** The County Board shall appoint a hearing committee.

**Subd. 4 Decision.** If the hearing officer determines that a violation of this ordinance did occur, that decision, along with the hearing officer's reasons for finding a violation and the penalty to be imposed under Section 1300 of this ordinance, shall be recorded in writing, a copy of which shall be provided to the accused violator. Likewise, if the hearing officer finds that no violation occurred or finds grounds for not imposing any

penalty, such findings shall be recorded and a copy provided to the acquitted accused violator.

**Subd. 5 Appeals.** Appeals of any decision made by the hearing committee shall be filed in the district court for the jurisdiction of the county in which the alleged violation occurred.

**Subd. 6 Continued Violation.** Each violation, and every day in which a violation occurs or continues, shall constitute a separate offense.

### **Section 1300. Penalties.**

**Subd. 1 Licensees.** Any licensee found to have violated this ordinance, or whose employees shall have violated this ordinance, shall be charged an administrative fine of \$75 for a first violation of this ordinance; \$200 for a second offense at the same licensed premises within a twenty-four (24) month period; and \$250 for a third or subsequent offense at the same location within a twenty-four (24) month period. In addition, after the third offense, the license shall be suspended for not less than seven (7) days.

**Subd. 2 Other Individuals.** Other individuals, other than minors regulated by subdivision 3 of this Subsection, found to be in violation of this ordinance shall be charged an administrative fee of \$50.

**Subd. 3 Prosecution.** Nothing in this Section shall prohibit the county from seeking prosecution as a misdemeanor for any alleged violation of this ordinance. If the county elects to seek misdemeanor prosecution, the action should not prohibit an administrative penalty also being imposed.

**Subd. 4 Failure to Pay Fine.** Failure to pay fine within the time ordered by the County Board of Commissioners shall be grounds for termination or suspension of license to sell tobacco.

**Section 1400. Exceptions and Defenses.** Nothing in this ordinance shall prevent the providing of tobacco, tobacco products, or tobacco related devices to a minor as part of a lawfully recognized religious, spiritual, or cultural ceremony. It shall be an affirmative defense to the violation of this ordinance for a person to have reasonably relied on proof of age as described by state law.

**Section 1500. Severability and Savings Clause.** If any section or portion of this ordinance shall be found unconstitutional or otherwise invalid or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, that finding shall not serve as an invalidation or effect the validity and

enforceability of any other section or provision of this ordinance.

**Section 1600. Effective Date.** This ordinance shall take effect June 1, 1999.

May 4, 1999 by *Samuel E. Meese*  
Date Chairman of the Benton County  
Board of Commissioners

May 4, 1999 by *[Signature]*  
Date County Coordinator



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OFFICE OF  
BENTON COUNTY RECORDER  
BENTON COUNTY, MN  
CERTIFIED TO BE FILED  
AND/OR RECORDED ON

JUN 11 9 38 AM '99

ALICE G. FUCHS  
COUNTY RECORDER

BY *mm* DEPUTY

Approved as to form and execution:

May 4, 1999 by *Michael S. [Signature]*  
Date County Attorney