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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH APPROVES SMOKE-FREE PUBLIC PLACES RULE

ORANGE COUNTY, NC (October 25, 2012)—During its meeting on Wednesday night, the [Orange County Board of Health](#) voted 10-1 in favor of a Rule to ban smoking in public places.

The idea of a smoke-free public places ordinance in Orange County originated two years ago when a group of County high schools students approached the Board of Health, requesting they consider adopting such a rule.

With the legal authority provided by the 2010 Smoke-Free Restaurants and Bars Law (N.C. General Statute 130A-198), allowing local governments to adopt and enforce smoke-free ordinances that are more comprehensive than State law in local settings; the Board of Health began researching the issue of secondhand smoke and how it affects the community.

As part of its 2012-2014 strategic plan, the Board of Health decided it was prepared to move forward with a comprehensive Rule that would expand smoke-free laws to include public places, such as government grounds, vehicles, parks, and sidewalks.

The Board of Health began a public input period on September 27, 2012, which ended on October 24, 2012, with a public hearing. They solicited community input via an online survey, designated e-mail and voicemail accounts, U.S. postal mail, and a community leader forum. The Board received feedback from 735 online surveys, 11 e-mails, five voicemails, and one mailed letter. Public input was largely supportive. When combining responses of 'Yes' and 'No Opinion,' all but Government Grounds (79.1%) and Sidewalks (71.2%) received support of 80% or greater.

During Wednesday night's public hearing, six Orange County residents signed-up to address the issue with the Board. Five spoke in favor of the Rule and one stated that while she understood the harmful effects of smoking, she believes banning smoking on sidewalks was going too far.

Chapel Hill High School senior, Brinklee Bailey brought visual aids as part of her statement to the Board. Placed on top of the podium were two bulk-sized jars filled with cigarette butts, which members of the Tobacco Reality Unfiltered (TRU) had collected in one afternoon on Franklin Street in Chapel Hill. In her comments, Bailey emphasized that, "Everyone can benefit from smoke-free public places because there will be cleaner spaces with less cigarette butts as well as cleaner air for everyone to breathe."

After closing the public hearing, Board of Health members reviewed the [data gathered from the public](#) input period and discussed the nuances of the Rule. By 8:30 p.m. the Rule was brought to a vote and passed 10-1.

The next step is for the Rule to be discussed by the [Orange County Board of County Commissioners](#) at its November 20, 2012, meeting. There will be an additional public hearing at that time, prior to the Commissioners deciding to vote on whether to approve the Rule.

If the Board of County Commissioners supports the Rule, it will go into effect with an educational period beginning on January 1, 2013. Full enforcement of the Rule would go into effect beginning on July 1, 2013.

To view the Rule and additional data, please visit <http://orangecountync.gov/health/smoke-freepublicplaces.asp>

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