

Posted: Tuesday, July 9, 2015 6:33 pm

By Tiffany Martinez

## **Council hears smoking restriction pleas**

Three women representing Tobacco Free Grady County (TFGC) pleaded their case at the city council meeting Monday evening, requesting a city ordinance be passed to ban smoking in public places and indoor workplaces.

The ordinance, if passed, will be one step toward establishing Chickasha as an Oklahoma Certified Healthy Community, making the city eligible for generous state grants.

“We are asking the city council to consider mirroring state law,” said TFGC President Alyson Kopycinski, “which is banning tobacco products—smokeless as well—in public spaces, such as parks, city-owned places and vehicles.”

According to state law and varying by establishment, a person must be 15 to 25 feet away from the entry or exit of a public place to smoke.

Exceptions to the ordinance would include: Stand-alone bars, stand-alone taverns, cigar bars, private offices, retail tobacco stores in which no food or beverages are sold and up to 25 percent of the guest rooms at lodging establishments.

Kopycinski guided the councilmen through a packet she organized equipped with copies of the state law, a sample ordinance and information on Oklahoma Certified Healthy Communities.

“The Interagency Coalition of Grady County is going to be very actively, and quickly, working on encouraging our schools to meet the criteria to be considered Certified Healthy Schools, businesses to be Certified Healthy Businesses and so on,” Kopycinski said. “Once a certain percentage of the community meets the criteria and files the application for their establishment to be certified healthy, then you’ve got a Certified Healthy Community. Once you’ve met that goal, the grants that are available as an incentive can be up to \$50,000—that’s money that can do things like build walking paths or parks, even buy playground equipment.”

Kopycinski, mother of two, said she shares the dream of many: the hope of leaving a cleaner environment behind for her children and grandchildren.

“Thirty percent of Grady County smokes, that’s five percent higher than the rest of the state,” Kopycinski said. “That’s just unacceptable.”

Mayor Hank Ross and City Manager Steward Fairburn agreed to have a draft ordinance written.