

Guymon DAILY HERALD

City says no to tobacco-free signs

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The City of Guymon gave a big thumbs down to a proposed proclamation declaring Cross Park a tobacco-free zone, Thursday evening. Cross Park—the one on the west side of the YMCA—already contains signs along the walking trail (the park's main feature) promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Community Development Director Vicki McCune said the park is used by children who go to the adjacent YMCA, Northridge Christian School and the new library that's under construction. She also said that by making a resolution declaring the park tobacco-free, it would open up some grant money to help finish up some projects planned for the park such as basketball courts, playground equipment and an amphitheater.

"We're looking at Cross Park because it's been considered the healthy-living park because of the walking trail and exercise units and the healthy living signs that you see along that trail," McCune said. "It's not an ordinance or law, just declaring, by resolution, to be tobacco-free."

James Parker of the YMCA said his facility is tobacco-free, as is Northridge Christian School. And by state law, so will the Guymon Public Library once it's completed next year.

"I just think it would be a great idea if we could get that going with that particular park," Parker said. "We thought this would be a good idea for our YMCA to take the lead on being tobacco-free and keep on with the mission statement that we have, which is youth development, social responsibility."

Kayla McCarter of the Texas County Health Department and Texas County Tobacco-free Coalition said the city wouldn't have to buy the signs because the coalition already has grant money.

But the city council balked at the idea.

"I'm not in favor," said Mayor Jim Norris. "Whether it's a resolution or an ordinance, it would be very, very difficult to enforce."

"My theory is where do you draw the line?" Norris said. "We sit there and say this is tobacco-free. First it could be tobacco, next it could be salt is terrible for you. I think you have to be real careful. Even if it's a resolution, someone's going to have to enforce it."

"There's no teeth in a resolution," said city attorney David Petty. "You can't issue a ticket, there is no enforcement."

"If we can't put any teeth in it, why even have a resolution?" Norris asked.



Signs like this one have been placed along the walking trail at Cross Park in Guymon. The Guymon City Council on Thursday rejected a request for a resolution declaring the park—located just west of the YMCA—a tobacco-free zone. The resolution would have opened the door for grant funding to complete some of the long-planned projects for the park. Staff photo/Shawn Yorks

Vice-mayor Kim Peterson said most people don't know the difference between a resolution and an ordinance. "This is a matter of local control and that by doing that, we're trying to mandate people's personal choices," Peterson said. "I understand what you're doing and I applaud it, but I think it kind of puts us in a tenuous situation."

Council member William King was also against the resolution. "I'm against the restrictions this puts against our citizens," King said.

McCune said this is just one park. "To me, to make one out of the 13 or 14 that we have available for people who want to live health..." she said. "I see what you're saying about taking people's right away, or making them feel like we're mandating what they have to do. This is just an avenue of saying this is a healthy living park."

Public Works Director Ivan Clark said it will take grant money to help complete Cross Park and the others in town. "When are we going to step up and get over the hump to finish the park" Clark said. "I don't think we're going to have the money in the budget anytime soon. Without grants, this is just going to be a waling trail. I need grant money as bad as I need anything."

Norris said the city is not against getting grant money. "To me, it's local, state or federal (government) telling you what you can and can't do," Norris said.

"Resolution is a fancy word for future ordinance," said Chet Krone, who said he is against the idea. "I'm not a smoker, but I don't want anybody stepping on my rights."

McCarter said it's more a self-enforcement resolution, reiterating that the surrounding properties (YMCA, Northridge Christian and the library) are and will be tobacco-free. "There's things to worry about besides writing tickets for tobacco use at a park," McCarter said. "We're getting mixed up talking about the YMCA. It's not about the YMCA."

"No, it's about their freedom," King said.

"To me it comes down to local control, where do you draw the line?" Norris said.

After about a 30-minutes discussion, the council rejected the resolution by a 5-0 vote.