

Dear Mayor Coleman and St. Paul City Council Members:

We are writing to you to seek some clarification on the process for the proposed Menthol, mint and wintergreen tobacco ban at our stores. As we have mentioned to you in-person and at the public hearing, unlike other major ordinance changes like fair scheduling and packing restrictions, this ordinance has been rushed through, without any meaningful dialogue with the impacted retailers.

Many of us were not joking when we, offered you the keys to our stores, at the public hearing. The ordinance as proposed will force many of us to close. Our current business model involves a wide mix of products and tobacco is one of them. In fact, even though sales are declining these products you are banning make up 25-30% of total sales. In examining research done in Minneapolis, we know that this ordinance will cost us \$225,000 or more, per store, in lost sales of tobacco and other products.

It is not as simple as just banning tobacco and replacing it with another product. This ordinance only makes these products illegal to sell in St. Paul, but customers are free to go to other communities to buy them. That means they take their gas purchases, snack purchases and all of their business to another community as well. And since the ordinance only prohibits the sale our former customers can still smoke or chew tobacco in-front our stores, and homes they just can't buy them from us.

We were encouraged that the final vote was extended for 1 month to October 25th, so the council could engage stakeholders. However, as of the date of this letter no meetings have taken place and the one meeting that was scheduled was cancelled, without explanation, 30 minutes before it was to start. There is one meeting scheduled for October 24th, but we do not understand how the Business Review Council can consider the agenda items that are supposed to be discussed and then respond to the St. Paul City Council with sound information, options and recommendations on how the city council should proceed, just one day before a final vote.

As those most devastated by the proposed ordinance we ask that you further delay a vote on this ordinance to have time to study the impacts and consider mitigation strategies to lessen the impact on local stores and jobs in the community. We understand that a study is being released that shows the impacts on Minneapolis retailers, we ask that a similar study be done in St. Paul, by a respected 3rd party source. This will allow us to proceed with facts and not just rhetoric as we move towards real solutions.

Finally, we urge you as city council members to insist upon an inclusive process coordinated through the Business Review Council to explore options and mitigation even if that means postponing the scheduled final vote that is to take place at the October 25, 2017 city council meeting.

Sincerely

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