

Minutes



The Grand Forks Tobacco Free Coalition is a group of citizens working together to create and promote a healthier, tobacco-free community through education, legislation, and enforcement of policies.

Tuesday, December 13th, 2016

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Members Present: Haley Thorson, Sarah Odegard, Kailee Dvorak, Denae Grove, Robin Landwehr, Bethany Satrom and Keith Westerfield.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Kailee opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

II. Legislative Update

With the election last month, there are many new legislators in Grand Forks County. Many who lost, were historically tobacco prevention advocates. It could create difficulty in this upcoming legislative session to preserve tobacco prevention funding.

The state-wide Measure 4 (Tobacco Tax) failed to be passed by voters, 62% to 38%. It was heavily opposed and funded by outside interests, namely the tobacco industry, which spent about four million dollars on its campaign. In Cass and Grand Forks County, the vote was close; almost 50-50. BreatheND did a good job educating on health benefits of a price increase, as did Veterans groups.

Focus for tobacco prevention this legislative session will be to preserve funding for the comprehensive tobacco prevention program, BreatheND. It is the backbone of the tobacco prevention program. High tobacco usage rates tell us our job is still not done. There are still cheap tobacco products in ND that are affecting our kids. Dismantling the program would be detrimental.

Haley distributed a listing of the updated Grand Forks Legislative Districts; showing who the local legislators (senators and representatives) are, along with their email addresses if coalition members would be willing to contact them. Haley went over the legislator information and how to find it on the internet, and it was discussed. GFPHD hosted a breakfast for GF Legislators on November 22nd. Legislators were presented with education on tobacco prevention successes, locally and statewide and the priority of continued funding. They were also contacted during City Legislative Forums and those who were unable to attend received packets. New reps do not have experience and it will definitely impact tobacco prevention.

The newly announced governor's annual budget did not include any funding for tobacco prevention. The final payment from MSA slated for June, 2017 could be taken by the legislature to fund other programs and needs. The budget was not passed yet, so it is not certain. Education and advocacy will be key in preserving the funding. Tobacco settlement dollars for tobacco prevention! BreatheND is currently funded through June 30, 2017, and they are still here to assist.

III. Member Sharing

Haley – If anyone is interested, there may still be some funding available if anyone wants to attend the 65th ND Legislative Assembly in Bismarck next month.

IV. Next Meeting – January 10th, 2017

V. Upcoming Events/Observances

- 65th ND Legislative Assembly, January 3, 2017, Bismarck
- Tobacco Prevention Coordinators Meeting, January 18-19, 2017, Bismarck
- Legislative Forum – GF City Council Chambers, January 21, 2017