



October 10, 2014

Public Health
Advisory Committee

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Minneapolis, MN 55415

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Dear Council Members:

The Minneapolis Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) would like to submit this letter in enthusiastic support of the proposed amendments to the City's current Staple Foods Ordinance. As a citizen advisory committee whose members have knowledge of public health issues, PHAC takes a special interest in the food supply available in our city. Enhancing the existing staple foods ordinance makes sense in an effort to address availability and disparity issues associated with access to healthy foods.

Our nation's struggle with obesity is well-publicized and there is no doubt that processed convenience foods contribute to that struggle. We also know that many people with lower socioeconomic status purchase these foods from places most readily accessible: a corner store, pharmacy, or general merchandise store. Data from the University of Minnesota indicates that 2/3 of children in low-income neighborhoods purchase food from a convenience store at least once each week. More importantly, 94% of individuals surveyed as part of the Minneapolis Healthy Corner Store Program reported that they would buy fresh fruits and vegetables from their corner store if they were available. PHAC believes that all Minneapolis residents should have the ability to choose healthy, nutritious items regardless of where they are able to purchase foods.

Limited access to healthy foods contributes to obesity, particularly childhood obesity, and to corresponding health problems such as diabetes and heart disease. These serious health problems often affect people of color disproportionately and, as such, create a layer of health disparity. Research indicates that predominantly white neighborhoods have as many as four times more grocery stores than non-white neighborhoods. PHAC's view is that taking measures to address lack of access to healthy foods upstream can help alleviate potentially serious health problems downstream in these communities.

Finally, while this kind of policy is innovative and forward-looking, it is also rooted in experience. The federal Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program revised their standards in 2010 to require participating stores to carry increased amounts and more variety of healthy foods. At the time, some voiced concern that the number of participating stores would decrease due to the new requirements, which they felt were too onerous, and that participants would drop out. In fact, the opposite happened. More than three-fourths of WIC participants used their vouchers for fruits and vegetables. Store owners reported increases in sales of whole grains, low fat milk, fresh fruits and vegetables and began to stock as much as 20 – 35% more of some items. These changes produced results. For example, in New York City obesity rates for one year olds have dropped by 6% since WIC implemented the new standards. The proposed amendments to the Minneapolis ordinance are, in part, based on the WIC standards.

The City recognizes that this transition may be difficult for some stores initially and has committed to working with store owners to provide extra support and technical assistance with marketing, advertising, food displays, training, etc. as the amended ordinance is fully implemented over a two-year period. Based on the information PHAC has reviewed and discussions with Minneapolis Health Department staff, we believe this is a win-win for the community's health and local business.

We recognize the important role that small grocery stores play in Minneapolis and we want to see them succeed. We also recognize that many residents have inequitable access to affordable, convenient healthy food options in their neighborhood. Strengthening the Staple Foods Ordinance is one piece of a broader effort across the city to help ensure that everyone has access to nutritious food. Small store owners should be a part of the solution in addressing this issue since many low-income residents and communities of color rely on these businesses to meet their daily needs.

Those of us who can access fresh produce and natural foods have a responsibility to help our neighbors do so as well. This is not just a public health obligation but smart policy.

Sincerely,

The City of Minneapolis - Public Health Advisory Committee

Julie Ring	Ward 1
Sahra Noor	Ward 2
Dr. Abdullahi Siyad	Ward 3
Saeng Kue	Ward 4
Dr. Happy Reynolds	Ward 6
Karen Soderberg, co-chair	Ward 7
Abdullahi Sheikh	Ward 8
Margaret (Peggy) Reinhardt	Ward 10
Birdie Cunningham	Ward 11
Autumn Chmielewski	Ward 12
Dr. Rebecca Thoman	Ward 13
Silvia Perez	Mayor's Representative
Linda Brandt	Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health
Dan Brady	Member At-Large
Joey Colianni	Member At-Large
Tamara Ward	Member At-Large
Jennifer Pelletier	University of MN – School of Public Health; abstained from vote due to involvement with evaluation of the ordinance



Public Health Advisory Committee

2015 Meeting Dates

PHAC meetings occur on the 4th Tuesday of each month and run from 6:00-8:00 PM in City Hall; exact room locations are indicated on the monthly agenda. A light supper is served at 5:45 PM in Room 132 City Hall. Please note: the full Committee of the PHAC meets every other month beginning **January 2015**. Sub-committees meet every other month independent of the full committee beginning **February 2015**. All members are expected to make every effort to attend each month. Members are also invited to consider which of three sub-committees they prefer to serve on: Collaboration & Engagement, Communications & Operations, or Policy & Planning. Although individual preferences are considered, health department staff may make alternative assignments to balance committee work and number of sub-committee members.

KEY: Full Committee meeting dates are **RED**; **Sub Committee meeting dates** are **GREEN**.

January 27, 2015

February 24, 2015

March 24, 2015

April 28, 2015

May 26, 2015

June 23, 2015

July 28, 2015

August 25, 2015

September 22, 2015

October 27, 2015

December 1, 2015—NOTE THAT THIS DATE IS NOT THE 4th TUESDAY OF THE MONTH.

If you have questions, please contact Don Moody by email at Don.Moody@minneapolismn.gov or by phone (612) 673-2907.