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Verona City Council OKs smoking ban

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The Verona City Council Monday unanimously approved a smoking ban in the city, making it the fifth city in Dane County to do so.

The ban, which will take effect Aug. 15, will prohibit smoking in all public places and places of employment, including bars, restaurants, stadiums and parks.

Before passing the ban, the council drastically reduced the places and businesses exempted from the law. City administrator Shawn Murphy said the council struck down proposed exceptions which would have allowed bars to have designated outdoor smoking sections, and hotels and motels to allow smoking in up to 15 percent of their rooms.

With those exceptions cut from the law, private residences are the only indoor places in Verona where smoking will be allowed once the ban takes effect.

Verona's ban is set to begin on the same day as Dane County's smoking ban, which applies to all towns and unincorporated areas in the county.

A smoking ban in Middleton took effect on March 15, and a ban in Monona is set to take effect June 1. Fitchburg and Madison already have smoking bans.

About eight members of the public spoke before the council voted, Murphy said. Two opposed the bill, saying it was an unreasonable infringement of civil liberties and a curtailment of individual choice.

One business owner, who did not oppose the bill, favored pushing back the date the ban would take effect to allow businesses more time to prepare, Murphy said.

The remaining five or so speakers were in favor of the ban.

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