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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRISTOL PARKS ARE SMOKE FREE ZONES

The City of Bristol Department of Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services announced that on Tuesday February 11, 2020, the Bristol City Council unanimously voted to approve an ordinance change prohibiting smoking and vaping in city parks.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention more than 16 million Americans are living with a disease caused by smoking which causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable illness attributing to more than 480,000 deaths in the United States every year and 41,000 deaths resulting from secondhand smoke exposure.

The change has the City of Bristol joining thousands of municipalities across the country that have adopted similar language in an effort to improve public health and create safe and clean public parks. While violation of the new ordinance may result in a \$90.00 fine, Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu states, "the ordinance will be complaint driven and not something the Police Department would be out patrolling to actively enforce. That said, if park users are vaping near playgrounds or smoking while sitting next to you at a summer concert, it is now an enforceable policy."

Superintendent of the Department of Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services, Dr. Joshua T. Medeiros said, "It's our department's mission to enhance the quality of life for all Bristol residents and we believe access to free, smoke free public parks is a right of every resident of our city. For many users, these outdoor spaces may be the only available place to be in-touch with nature and enjoy access to clean, fresh air. We want our outdoor spaces to remain open and accessible while also producing the best user experience for our guests and the environment". He further stated, "The ordinance change will allow both the public and our staff to address individuals that are smoking near playgrounds, spray parks, swimming pools, and other recreational areas where kids and adults play."

The ordinance change supports the Department of Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services deliverables for the Drug Free Communities Grant, a federal grant awarded to the city to create

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sustainable community level change through environmental prevention strategies with a focus on reducing and eliminating youth substance abuse. This ordinance change will allow the department to utilize grant funds to purchase new signage and informational materials to promote the policy change. Superintendent Medeiros stated, “The work of the B.E.S.T.-4- Bristol Drug Free Community Coalition is essential and this ordinance change is one piece of a community wide change initiative that will strengthen our cities health and wellbeing for years to come.”

The ordinance change was unanimously supported by the Board of Park Commissioners at their regular meeting in October 2019 and the Youth Commissioners at their regular meeting in December 2019.

For a full listing of City of Bristol park rules and ordinances please visit www.bristolrec.com.

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