



OldTownAlexandriaPatch

GOVERNMENT

City Council Poised to Amend Ordinance Covering Breastfeeding

Council members on Saturday will vote whether to exempt breastfeeding from the city's indecent exposure ordinance

By **Sharon McLoone** February 11, 2011

Alexandria City Council on Saturday will vote on whether to exempt breastfeeding from an ordinance governing indecent exposure.

The law, which was last amended in 1983, says it's unlawful to show a female breast "with less than a fully opaque covering of any portion thereof...below the top of the nipple."

That means any woman who does not have a covering such as a shawl or blanket draped over her breastfeeding baby could be charged with indecent exposure. The new law would allow a woman to breastfeed without an "opaque covering."



Although no woman has been arrested in the city for breastfeeding, councilmen Rob Krupicka and Kerry Donley pushed to clarify the law after being approached by non-profit Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria.

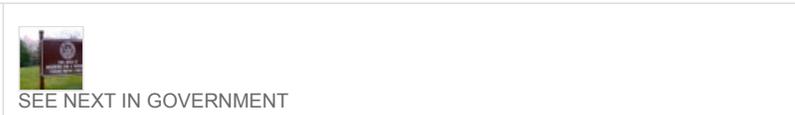
The non-profit has been studying breastfeeding's link to reducing childhood obesity and learned of the restrictive ordinance.

The new ordinance to be decided upon on Saturday also would require nursing breaks for mothers who work at Alexandria businesses with more than 50 employees.

Lisa Baker, chief officer for strategic initiatives for the city's Department of Community and Human Services and former head of the Office on Women, said she expects that the council will approve the new ordinance.

"I think this is a really great proactive step forward for the city for the health of our moms and our children. They're not waiting for a big problem to happen," Baker said. "This is good for our families in Alexandria. It helps women. It helps children stay healthier and helps in reducing childhood obesity. I'm proud of the council for doing this."

Interested in a follow-up to this article?



COMMENTS (1)

Barbara Martinez

9:36am on Friday, February 11, 2011

I think it's great that Alexandria is going to change this outdated law, but nursing mothers are already protected by the state of Virginia statute that exempts instances of breastfeeding from idecency laws. (<http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+18.2-387>)