

GRATIOT COUNTY

Alma library bans e-cigarettes, companion pets

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The Alma Public Library is taking some proactive steps by banning two things from its building: e-cigarettes and companion pets.

Both items, which are sort of “signs of our time” have in recent months brought up questions for both patrons and employees.

Bryan Dinwoody, the director and librarian for

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the library said that as far as e-cigarettes were concerned, the board thought it best to be consistent.

“We had some people asking if they could use (e-cigarettes) in the library, and it brought up a lot of issues as far as regulations,” he said. “There’s still a cloud produced; some people are sensitive to smells. It’s just not good for a public building.”

Dinwoody said growing public health concerns regarding e-cigarette smoking or “vaping” motivated the library’s board to bring their concerns to the city commission before it became an issue.

“Regulations are not in place, and we wanted to make sure we had the backing of the commission,” Dinwoody said.

They did, and with the city’s blessing the library board voted to ban e-cigarettes on May 5. At the same time, they created a regulation banning com-

panion pets.

“These aren’t seeing-eye dogs or the AKC trained animals we bring in for reading programs with children,” Dinwoody said. “Someone just needs any doctor’s note to say their pet is their companion, and then they are. It could be anything, it could be a spider in a cage.”

Dinwoody said a few times at the library, patrons had attempted to bring in pets they referred to as companion pets, and employees weren’t sure how to handle the situation, so the board wanted a clear policy.

“If a dog isn’t trained, or snaps...that’s all we need is a child to be bit or scratched,” Dinwoody said. “This is a public library, not an ark or a zoo.”

Service dogs are still allowed.

Dinwoody said the board’s decisions on e-cigarettes and companion pets is about a safe environment for all library patrons.

“These are things that don’t have regulations, so we needed to be proactive,” he said.