



## **CITY OF KIRKLAND**

**Department of Public Works**

**123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033 425.587.3800**

**[www.kirklandwa.gov](http://www.kirklandwa.gov)**

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### **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager

**From:** John MacGillivray, Solid Waste Programs Lead  
Ray Steiger, P.E., Public Works Director

**Date:** November 22, 2011

**Subject:** Pharmaceutical Drug Take-back Resolution

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt a resolution in support of the establishment of a pharmaceutical drug take-back program in the State of Washington.

#### **BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:**

An overview of the pharmaceutical drug issue and three facts sheets are included as attachments to this memorandum.

In the 2011 legislative session, the prescription drug take-back bill failed to pass out of the Senate and no floor vote was taken although there were 24 senators in support of the bill and 25 in opposition. This bill was strongly opposed by the pharmaceutical companies and industry associations that employed more than 20 lobbyists in Olympia. They were unwilling to negotiate on any aspect of this legislation, despite the fact that the bill required the pharmaceutical companies to spend, at most, a couple of pennies per pill bottle on the take-back program and would have allowed them to pass the additional cost on to consumers.

Due to the Legislature's two year cycle, the SSB 5234 will start in the Senate Rules Committee and could be introduced for a floor vote if enough senators can be convinced to support the bill. A similar bill will also be reintroduced in the House. This legislation was endorsed by over 140 organizations to this legislation, including the City of Kirkland, law enforcement agencies from 24 cities and 29 counties, health and medical organizations, substance abuse groups and environmental organizations.

Please direct any questions regarding this resolution and legislation to John MacGillivray, Solid Waste Programs Lead at extension 3804 or email at [jmacgillivray@kirklandwa.gov](mailto:jmacgillivray@kirklandwa.gov).

## Pharmaceutical Take-Back: Overview

**Washington State needs a safe take-back system for leftover and expired medicines to protect public safety and water quality.** Large amounts of prescription and over-the-counter medicines, estimated at about 30% of medicines sold, go unused for a variety of reasons. Expired or left-over medicines that accumulate in home medicine cabinets contribute to rapidly increasing rates of poisonings and drug abuse. Flushing or trash disposal of medicines releases these hazardous, long-lived chemicals into our waterways, contributing to contamination of Puget Sound and water supplies. Medicine take-back programs securely collect drugs and safely dispose of them by high temperature incineration.

**Epidemic of abuse and poisonings from medicines in our homes.** Prescription drug abuse is a growing problem in our communities and most abusers get the pills from a friend or relative.

- Deaths due to drug overdoses in Washington are greater than deaths from car crashes.<sup>1</sup>
- Misused prescription drugs are the illicit drug of choice among 12 and 13-year olds.<sup>2</sup>
- More than three out of five teens say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from parents' and grandparents' medicine cabinets. Over half of teens abusing medicines get them from a family member or friend, often without their knowledge.<sup>3</sup>
- 32% of child poisoning deaths in Washington were caused by someone else's prescription medication and 26% were caused by over-the-counter medications.<sup>4</sup>
- Emergency room visits in Seattle for non-medical use of prescription opiates went up 47% from 2004 to 2007. 3,529 emergency room visits in 2006 were caused by prescription opiate medications.<sup>5</sup>
- Of 240 drug-caused deaths in King County in 2010, 130 involved prescription opiates.<sup>6</sup>
- 39% of heroin users in King County said they got addicted to prescription painkillers before starting to use heroin, in a recent study.<sup>7</sup>

**Disposal of waste medicines in sewers and in the garbage contributes to contamination of Puget Sound, local waterways and drinking water supplies.**

- Flushing waste medicines releases drugs into waterways because wastewater treatment facilities do not effectively remove or degrade pharmaceutical compounds.
- Throwing medicines in the garbage can - especially controlled substances like OxyContin and other pain relievers - is not safe because the drugs can be obtained and used illegally.
- Disposal of pharmaceuticals in the trash does not guarantee that active drugs will not end up in the environment. For example, the King County Cedar Hills landfill generates 100 million gallons a year of landfill leachate (which contains chemicals that seep out of the garbage). That leachate is pumped to a sewage treatment facility. However, those facilities are not designed to remove complex chemicals prior to discharging effluent into Puget Sound.
- When discarded, most medicines designate as dangerous waste under Washington State Dangerous Waste regulations, or as hazardous waste under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, so they should not be disposed of in the solid waste stream.
- Research is demonstrating harm to aquatic species from exposure to the low levels of pharmaceuticals commonly found in the environment.<sup>8</sup>
- Contamination of municipal drinking water supplies by low levels of a complex mixture of pharmaceuticals is a growing concern.<sup>9</sup>

**Voluntary take-back programs are collecting large amounts of medicines, but are wholly inadequate to fully serve the state.** By partnering with law enforcement, medicine take-back programs can collect controlled substances, without waiting for anticipated 2012 changes to DEA regulations. Pharmacies can collect all medicines except controlled substances. Due to the tremendous need for drug take-back, the DEA is offering limited assistance to local law enforcement to provide a few National Pharmaceutical Take-Back events, but this federal assistance is short-term. Convenient and permanent drop-off locations are needed to help solve the problem.

**Dedicated funding is needed to create and sustain a statewide program.** Financing is the key barrier to providing a comprehensive take-back system for Washington. Over-stretched local law enforcement and local government budgets cannot absorb the costs of providing a take-back system. Drug companies can incorporate the relatively small costs of take-back into their product costs and business models. Drug producers fund and provide medicine return programs in several other countries such as Canada (British Columbia), Italy, France and Spain. Anticipated costs to drug producers of a statewide take-back program would amount to about two pennies for each container of medicines sold. To pharmaceutical companies, this would be a drop in the bucket compared to annual sales of over \$4 billion in Washington State.

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Information Sources:

1. Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics. 2007 Death Data. (2009). Available online at: [http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/CHS/chs-data/death/dea\\_VD.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/CHS/chs-data/death/dea_VD.htm). Accessed 9/19/10. See also, CADCA's summary: More People Killed by Drugs Than by Car Accidents in Some States. October 8, 2009. Available online at: <http://www.cadca.org/resources/detail/more-people-killed-drugs-car-accidents-some-states>, accessed 10/20/10.
2. Office of National Drug Control Policy, Executive Office of the President, January, 2008. Prescription for Danger: A Report on the Troubling Trend of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drug Abuse Among the Nation's Teens. Available online at: [http://www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/prescription\\_report.pdf](http://www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/prescription_report.pdf), accessed 11/20/08.
3. Washington State Department of Health. (2008). "Poisoning and drug overdose." Washington State Injury and Violence Prevention Guide. DOH Publication No: 530-090. Available online at: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsga/emstrauma/injury/pubs/icpg/DOH530090Poison.pdf>
4. Sabel, J. (2004). Washington State Childhood Injury Report – Poisoning Chapter. WA DOH. Available online at: [http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsga/emstrauma/injury/pubs/wscir/WSCIR\\_Poisoning.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsga/emstrauma/injury/pubs/wscir/WSCIR_Poisoning.pdf)
5. Banta-Green, C, et al. (2007). *The Use & Abuse of Prescription-Type Opiates in Washington State, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute*, University of Washington. Available online at [http://depts.washington.edu/adai/pubs/arb/PrescriptionOpiates\\_March30\\_2007.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/adai/pubs/arb/PrescriptionOpiates_March30_2007.pdf), accessed 12/4/09.
6. Data from University of Washington Alcohol & Drug Abuse Institute study, cited in June 8, 2011 article in Seattle Times, "Most overdose deaths in King County don't involve illegal drugs", online at: [http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2015263438\\_drugs09m.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2015263438_drugs09m.html)
7. Banta-Green, C., et al. (2010). Drug Abuse Trends in the Seattle/King County Area: 2009. Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse. Prepared for the Community Epidemiology Work Group, June 2010. Available online at: [http://depts.washington.edu/adai/pubs/tr/cewg/CEWG\\_Seattle\\_June2010.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/adai/pubs/tr/cewg/CEWG_Seattle_June2010.pdf)
8. For more information and references, see: <http://www.takebackyourmeds.org/why/medicines-in-the-environment>
9. AP Investigation: Pharmaceuticals Found in Drinking Water. [http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/pharmawater\\_site/](http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/pharmawater_site/)

## What is Take Back Your Meds?

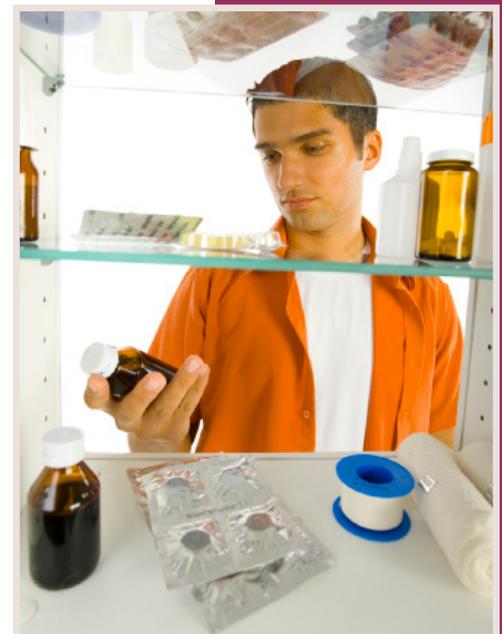
We are a group of health organizations, environmental groups, police, drugstores, and others demanding a statewide program for the safe return and disposal of left-over medicines.

- Safe means a secure and convenient system where residents can return leftover medications – throughout Washington.
- Safe also means the proper disposal of what are essentially toxic leftovers – and the only proven method is through high-temperature incineration.

### Leftover medications are a threat to us all.

Why? Because unused, leftover drugs are endangering our children, our families and going into the water supply threatening our health and the environment.

- Emergency room visits involving nonmedical use of narcotic pain relievers rose 111% from 2004 to 2008. (Drug Abuse Warning Network)
- Fatal poisonings in Washington State increased 395% from 1990 to 2006. (WA DOH)
- 85% of poisoning deaths involved medicines in 2006. (WA DOH)
- 32% of child poisoning deaths in Washington were caused by someone else's prescription medication and 26% were caused by over-the-counter medications. (WA DOH)
- Three fifths (57%) of all new prescription drug abusers were younger than age 18 in 2009. Over 20% of high school students have taken medicine for a non medical reason. (National Survey on Drug Use and Health)
- Our medicine cabinets provide teens with easy access to drugs - more than three out of five teens say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from parents' and grandparents' medicine cabinets and half of teens say prescription medications are easy to get through other people's prescriptions. (WA DOH)
- Drug overdoses in Washington have surpassed car crashes as the leading cause of accidental deaths. The majority of these overdoses involved prescription opiates. (WA DOH)



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- Of 139 streams sampled throughout the U.S., 80% tested positive for pharmaceutical drug contamination. (USGS)
- Researchers have found drugs like painkillers, antihistamines, antibiotics, heart medications and hormones in surface, ground and marine waters as well as soils and sediments in the Pacific Northwest. (multiple studies, see more info at [www.takebackyourmeds.org/why/medicines-in-the-environment](http://www.takebackyourmeds.org/why/medicines-in-the-environment))
- A wide range of medicines have been found in the drinking water of 24 major metropolitan cities. (AP Investigation)



## It's time for drug companies to do what's right!

Without proper disposal, unwanted and leftover medicines are potentially dangerous and at risk of becoming toxic waste. It's time for the drug companies that make and sell medicines to provide a sustainable statewide program for the safe return and disposal of unwanted medicines, just as they do in other countries.

- Drug companies generated over \$4 billion in sales in Washington State alone last year. (State Health Facts)
- These same companies spent \$450 million promoting sales of medicines in Washington in 2008. (Congressional Budget Office)
- Providing a safe and sustainable take-back program would cost the drug companies a couple of pennies per container of medicine sold in our state.



## Find out more and get involved.



Visit us at [www.TakeBackYourMeds.org](http://www.TakeBackYourMeds.org)



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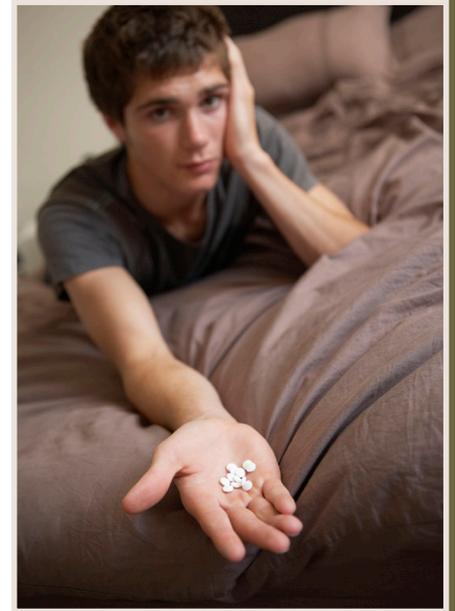
To access the resources cited in this fact sheet, visit [www.TakeBackYourMeds.org/news-and-resources](http://www.TakeBackYourMeds.org/news-and-resources)

## Prescription Drug Abuse and Poisonings: The Facts

Each year about 33 million containers of prescription and over-the-counter drugs are left unused in Washington. These unused drugs are like a loaded gun in the wrong hands. **Drug overdoses have surpassed car crashes as the leading cause of accidental deaths in Washington.** With the medicine cabinet serving as the new “drug dealer,” the importance of properly disposing of leftover medications cannot be stressed enough.

### Prescription drug abuse by Washington teens is on the rise:

-  Washington State has one of the highest teen prescription drug abuse rates in the nation – 12% of high school seniors used prescription pain medicines to get high in the last 30 days. *(WA DOH)*
-  Many teens mistakenly think medicines are safer to abuse than illegal drugs.
-  Three fifths (57%) of all new prescription drug abusers were younger than age 18 in 2009. Over 20% of high school students have taken medicine for a nonmedical reason. *(National Survey on Drug Use and Health)*
-  More than three out of five teens say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from parents’ and grandparents’ medicine cabinets. Over half of teens abusing medicines get them from a family member or friend, often without their knowledge. *(WA DOH)*
-  Youth admissions to state-funded treatment for prescription opiate abuse are now 18 times higher than in 2001. *(WA Division Alcohol and Substance Abuse)*
-  Abuse of prescription opiates, like OxyContin and Vicodin, can lead to heroin use. 39% of heroin users said they got addicted to prescription painkillers before starting to use heroin, in a recent study in King County. *(UW Alcohol & Drug Abuse Institute)*



“

Today, prescription drug abuse is considered the fastest-growing drug problem in the country...Without question, getting old, unused, or expired drugs out of medicine cabinets is critical.

”

- U.S. Attorney  
General Eric Holder,  
September, 2010

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## Accidental overdoses and Poisonings:

-  Fatal poisonings increased 395% from 1990 to 2006 in Washington State; 85% of these deaths involved medicines. (WA DOH)
-  In 2007, 18,000 people went to Washington State emergency rooms because of nonmedical use of medicines. (Drug Abuse Warning Network)
-  Children are at high risk for accidental overdose or poisoning when prescription drugs are stored in the house and not properly disposed of:
  - Over 17,000 calls to the Washington Poison Center in 2009 involved children under the age of six who had been poisoned by medicines left in the home.
  - Children are the most common victims of nonfatal poisonings involving the accidental ingestion of prescription or over-the-counter drugs.
  - 32% of child poisoning deaths in Washington were caused by someone else's prescription medication and 26% were caused by over-the-counter medications. (WA DOH)
-  The elderly are also at risk – over 2,800 calls to the Washington Poison Center in 2009 were from seniors calling about medications.



Find out about efforts to create a statewide program for the safe return and disposal of leftover medicines.

## Find out more and get involved.



Visit us at [www.TakeBackYourMeds.org](http://www.TakeBackYourMeds.org)



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**Learn More...** Washington's Secure Medicine Take-Back Bill SB5234/HB1370 at [www.takebackyourmeds.org/make-it-happen/proposed-state-law](http://www.takebackyourmeds.org/make-it-happen/proposed-state-law)

## Take Back Your Meds: Help Fight Pharmaceutical Pollution

**“Pharmaceuticals have become a significant water pollutant nationwide”**

according to a recent report by the President’s Cancer Panel. Each year roughly 33 million containers of medicine are left unused in Washington State. These medicines are extremely potent chemicals and most designate as dangerous or hazardous waste when leftover or expired.

Unfortunately, most people don’t know how to properly dispose of unused medicines, or don’t have good options in their community for environmentally sound disposal.

Flushing unneeded medicines down the toilet or sink sends these toxic chemicals out into our rivers, marine waters, and water supplies – potentially harming aquatic ecosystems and exposing our families. Putting medicines into the trash is not the answer either. Landfills for household garbage are not designed to store and treat hazardous waste. **You wouldn’t put used motor oil in the garbage – why would you put potentially lethal leftover medicines in the trash can?**

**Take Back Your Meds** is a group of environmental organizations, health organizations, police, drugstores, local governments, and others demanding a state-wide program for the safe return and environmentally-sound disposal of leftover medicines.



### How do pharmaceuticals get into our environment?

Major sources of pharmaceutical pollution are: improper disposal of waste medicines (from flushing or trash disposal), excretion from our bodies, and industrial pollution from drug manufacturing facilities.

Wastewater treatment facilities and septic systems are not designed to remove or destroy pharmaceuticals that are flushed away. Drugs also enter wastewater facilities through landfill leachate – or “garbage juice” – the water that seeps through garbage. Leachate is pumped out of most lined landfills in wet areas of our state and shipped to wastewater facilities. Many drugs pass right through wastewater treatment and are discharged into waterways, others settle out into biosolids that are often applied to land as fertilizer. New treatment technologies to remove some drugs are being explored, but it will cost billions of dollars to upgrade wastewater systems in our state.

*“There’s no doubt about it, pharmaceuticals are being detected in the environment and there is genuine concern that these compounds, in the small concentrations that they’re at, could be causing impacts to human health or to aquatic organisms.”*

**-Mary Buzby,  
Director of  
Environmental  
Rechnology for  
Merck & Co.  
Pharmaceuticals,  
USA Today,  
March 2008**

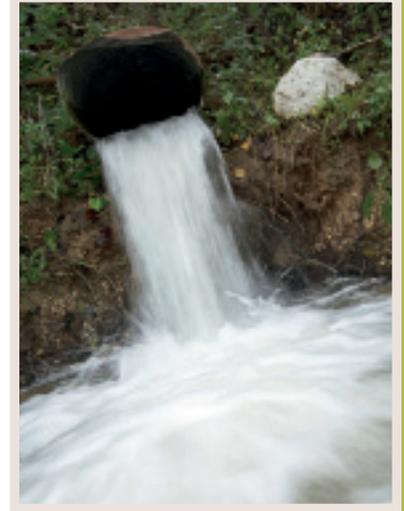
## What are pharmaceuticals in our waters doing to us?

What we know is that even the low levels of medicines found in our waterways hurt fish and other aquatic life. Researchers have observed negative changes in fish including altered reproductive function, lethargic behavior, and a decreased ability to compete. And a range of medicines show up in the tissues of fish and other aquatic species, which are part of our food chain. (see [www.TakeBackYourMeds.org](http://www.TakeBackYourMeds.org) for more information)

A wide range of medicines are in our waterways. Recent studies have found:

- Medicines – including heart medication, pain relievers, tranquilizers, anti-seizure medicines, and antibiotics – in the drinking water of 24 major U.S. metropolitan areas.
- Medicines in the Columbia River and in the “treated” wastewater going into local waters of Olympia, Lacey, Puyallup and Tacoma, and in the Sequim-Dungeness region.
- Synthetic hormones from medicines in lakes and streams in King County.
- Medicines coming from septic systems in Liberty Bay near Poulsbo.

Being exposed to this complicated mixture of medicines that were designed to alter our bodies can't be a good thing for us - or for our children. **We need to ask ourselves “what can we do right now to keep medicines from polluting our water and our environment?”**



## What can we do right now?

If we don't begin to act now, we are passing the problem of pharmaceutical pollution on to future generations. A medicine take-back system is a simple and cost-effective way to keep waste medicines – estimated to be about one-third of all prescription and over-the-counter drugs sold each year – from getting into our waters and our environment. Unused medicines can be safely collected and properly disposed of through high-temperature incineration at properly permitted facilities.

If your community has a temporary medicine take-back program, use it! Unfortunately funding for medicine take-back programs is unstable and programs are not available in most communities in our state.

**Washington needs a sustainable, statewide medicine take-back program.** It is time for the drug companies – who make and sell medicines – to step up and provide a statewide program to safely collect and dispose of the leftovers, just as they already do in other countries.

## Find out more and get involved.



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RESOLUTION R-4904

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND TO SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PHARMACEUTICAL DRUG TAKE BACK PROGRAM IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON.

WHEREAS, drug overdose deaths, abuse of prescription pain killers and abuse of pharmaceuticals by young people is a growing problem and unwanted pharmaceuticals left in the home contribute to opportunities for drug abuse, drug diversion and accidental poisonings; and

WHEREAS, most pharmaceuticals, when discarded, designate as dangerous waste under the Washington State Dangerous Waste regulations (Chapter 173-303 WAC); or hazardous waste under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) (42 USC 6901), or both; and

WHEREAS, pharmaceuticals disposed of by flushing into sewers are not completely treated or removed by sewage treatment facilities, or onsite sewage systems allowing pharmaceuticals to be released into the environment; and

WHEREAS, pharmaceuticals disposed of in the trash are not secure from diversion or may eventually end up in landfill leachate which may be sent to sewage treatment facilities, eventually allowing pharmaceuticals to be released into the environment; and

WHEREAS, pharmaceuticals present in the aquatic environment pose risks to the health and reproductive capabilities of Chinook salmon, Orca whales and other species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act; and

WHEREAS, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency recommend the use of pharmaceutical take-back programs where available as a safer disposal method than throwing pharmaceuticals in the trash;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Kirkland as follows:

Section 1. We encourage the establishment and use of pharmaceutical take-back programs that destroy collected drugs at appropriately permitted facilities as the most safe, secure, convenient and environmentally sound method for the disposal of unused, unwanted or expired pharmaceuticals from households; and

Section 2. Pharmaceuticals should not be disposed of in any sewage treatment facility, as these systems are not designed to treat or remove these complex chemicals, which can be released into the environment.

Section 3. Pharmaceuticals should not be disposed of in municipal solid waste at the curbside or at any transfer station or landfill, because they may end of in landfill leachate, which is often conveyed to sewage treatment facilities, eventually allowing pharmaceuticals to be released into the environment.

Section 4. At such time an adequate, convenient and secure pharmaceutical take-back system is available to residents, local actions will be explored to prohibit the disposal of waste pharmaceuticals to sewage and solid waste systems.

Passed by majority vote of the Kirkland City Council in open meeting the \_\_\_\_day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2011.

Signed in authentication thereof this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk