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2 **ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING**
3 **FOR THE CITY OF REDONDO BEACH, CALIFORNIA**
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5 CITY OF REDONDO BEACH,
6 CALIFORNIA,

7 Complainant,

8 vs.

9 MANHATTAN BEACH SMOKE SHOP,
10 INC.

11 Respondent

) **DECISION AND ORDER: RE:**
) MANHATTAN BEACH SMOKE SHOP,
) INC. BUSINESS LICENSE REVOCATION

) Date: December 10, 2025

) Time: 1:30 p.m.

) Place: City Council Chambers, Redondo
) Beach City Hall

) Administrative Hearing Officer: Luke
) Smude

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13 The Administrative Hearing in the above-entitled matter was scheduled to
14 commence at 1:30 p.m. on December 10, 2025 in the Planning Conference Room in
15 Redondo Beach City Hall located at 415 Diamond Street, Redondo Beach, California
16 92077. Prior to the start of the Administrative Hearing, all parties were amenable to
17 moving the site of the Hearing to the City Council Chambers, also located within Redondo
18 Beach City Hall.

19 The City of Redondo Beach was present and represented by Stephanie Johnson,
20 Senior Deputy City Prosecutor. The Hearing was also attended by Lt. Strosneider, Officer
21 Trammel, and Sergeant Spry from the Redondo Beach Police Department.

22 Manhattan Beach Smoke Shop, Inc. (Manhattan Beach Smoke Shop) was
23 represented by Sammy Zreik, Attorney at Law. Mr. Zreik was joined by Feras Adamo,
24 the identified owner of Manhattan Beach Smoke Shop.

25 Assistant City Attorney Cheryl Park was also present and served as the Legal
26 Advisor to the Hearing Officer.
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1 The hearing was convened following a Notice of Revocation issued on November
2 25, 2025, based on violations of state and municipal laws governing the sale, offer for
3 sale, possession with intent to sell flavored tobacco products, including Health and Safety
4 Code Sections 104559.5(a)(17)(A)(i), 104559.5(a)(18), 104559.5(a)(1), and
5 104559.5(b)(1) and Redondo beach Municipal Code Section 5-9.205(c).

6 I, Luke Smude, the Hearing Officer, commenced the hearing at 1:37 p.m.

7 The City of Redondo Beach presented their case first. The City of Redondo Beach
8 submitted a packet comprised of eight (8) exhibits that were admitted into evidence.

9 Sergeant Spry testified regarding an inspection that took place at the Manhattan
10 Beach Smoke Shop on March 18, 2025. His testimony included:

- 11 • Sgt. Spry has over 25 years of law enforcement experience, including 15
12 years with RBPB and 10 years with the LA School Police. He has extensive
13 experience in investigating and prosecuting sales-related cases, particularly
14 involving career criminals and narcotics.
- 15 • Sgt. Spry coordinated with the California Department of Tax and Fee
16 Administration (CDTFA) to conduct an inspection of Manhattan Beach
17 Smoke Shop following community complaints and a report made during a
18 City Council meeting. The inspection was carried out by CDTFA Inspectors
19 Benitez and Wilkerson, accompanied by Sgt. Spry and other RBPB
20 detectives. The team arrived at the business in plain clothes with visible
21 police identification and conducted the inspection under applicable state
22 and local laws.
- 23 • During the inspection, Sgt. Spry observed CDTFA agents identifying and
24 separating flavored tobacco and nicotine products from other inventory.
25 These included flavored vapes, menthol cigarettes, and flavored nicotine
26 pouches (e.g., Zyn). Products were found behind the counter, in storage
27 areas, and in a locked cabinet on the retail floor. The total number of seized
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1 items exceeded 1,600, with an estimated retail value of approximately
2 \$20,000.

- 3 • Sgt. Spry did not personally conduct the inspection but reviewed the CDTFA
4 report prior to the hearing. He confirmed the presence of 1,051 products
5 seized from the retail and storage areas, including 373 flavored nicotine
6 pouches and 579 flavored cigarettes. He noted that the store layout
7 included multiple display cases, a cigar room, and a point-of-sale system,
8 indicating a fully operational retail environment.
- 9 • In Sgt. Spry's professional opinion, the quantity and placement of the seized
10 products demonstrated possession with intent to sell. He emphasized that
11 the volume of inventory and its accessibility within a retail setting suggested
12 commercial activity rather than personal use. The inspection concluded with
13 the issuance of an administrative citation to the business owner.

14 Mr. Zreik then presented his case via oral arguments and testimony from Feras
15 Adamo. The evidence included:

- 16 • Mr. Adamo is the owner of Manhattan Beach Smoke Shop, which began
17 operations at the current location on January 1, 2024, following its
18 incorporation in 2014 and prior operation at 1005 N. Aviation Blvd. The
19 business had no prior citations from the City of Manhattan Beach or CDTFA.
- 20 • Mr. Adamo testified that he purchased and remodeled the Redondo Beach
21 property, investing over \$1 million in building improvements and an
22 additional \$80,000 in sidewalk upgrades to meet code requirements. Upon
23 closing the Manhattan Beach location, approximately \$500,000 in inventory
24 was relocated to the new site. He emphasized that the business has never
25 been cited for selling flavored tobacco or selling to minors.
- 26 • The store enforces strict age verification policies, including signage
27 prohibiting entry to individuals under 21 and the use of ID scanning
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1 equipment. Employees are trained to check IDs and deny entry to underage
2 individuals.

- 3 • Regarding the March 18, 2025 inspection, Mr. Adamo was not present at
4 the time but responded promptly to CDTFA's request to access the office
5 and storage areas. He cooperated fully with the inspection and provided
6 invoices for all products. He stated that all products were California excise
7 tax compliant, with no counterfeit or out-of-state items.
- 8 • Mr. Adamo clarified that no tobacco products were seized prior to his arrival,
9 as the storage area was secured with a deadbolt and access code. He
10 asserted that the flavored tobacco products were not for sale and were
11 remnants from the previous location. He noted that wholesalers do not
12 accept returns of such products, leaving him with limited options for
13 disposal. He had elected to store the flavor banned products in a locked
14 storage area that was not accessible to employees on the sales floor.
- 15 • He estimated the value of the flavored products at approximately \$25,000,
16 which he considered a small portion of his overall inventory. He explained
17 that the small size of vape and nicotine products can quickly accumulate to
18 high quantities.
- 19 • The business employs 45 full-time staff, maintains compliance with EDD
20 and insurance requirements, and has no tax or regulatory violations.
- 21 • Mr. Adamo expressed that the license revocation would cause devastating
22 hardship. He committed to full compliance with City codes, welcomed future
23 inspections, and offered to subdivide the store to better manage inventory.
24 Mr. Zreik, who has represented the family since 2005, attested to their
25 history of honest business practices and regular audits by the state.
- 26 • Mr. Adamo acknowledged awareness of the flavored tobacco ban, noting
27 that although the ban was enacted in 2022 and upheld by voters,
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1 enforcement by CDTFA began in 2024. He maintained that the products
2 were not actively offered for sale at the Redondo Beach location.

3 Ms. Johnson presented the City's closing arguments, emphasizing that the hearing
4 was convened to determine whether the Manhattan Beach Smoke Shop violated laws
5 prohibiting the sale, or possession for sale of flavored tobacco products.

6 The City reiterated key evidence presented during the hearing, including testimony
7 from Sgt. Spry, who observed flavored vape products stored behind the retail counter—
8 an area typically associated with items intended for sale.

9 While acknowledging Mr. Adamo's claim of compliance and good faith, the City
10 questioned the lack of preserved surveillance footage that could have clarified the
11 placement and accessibility of the banned products. The City noted that the flavored
12 tobacco ban was enacted in 2022, and Mr. Adamo had ample time to remove or relocate
13 the prohibited products from the retail environment.

14 The City argued that the presence of flavored tobacco products in both the retail
15 and back storage areas—some of which were not securely locked—raised concerns
16 about their availability for sale. Based on the totality of the evidence and the standard of
17 a preponderance of evidence, the City concluded that the business possessed and
18 displayed flavored tobacco products in a manner consistent with intent to sell.

19 Accordingly, the City asserted that the temporary suspension of Business License
20 No. 330177 and the permanent revocation of the business license are warranted based
21 on the evidence presented.

22 In his closing argument for the Respondent, Mr. Zreik argued that the detective
23 present during the inspection was acting in a law enforcement capacity and did not
24 conduct the actual investigation or seize any products. They emphasized that merely
25 observing the presence of flavored tobacco products does not constitute intent to sell.
26 Specifically, they noted that vape juice was not actively being sold at the time of the
27 inspection, challenging the assertion that possession equated to commercial intent.
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1 All testimony, evidence, and arguments presented by the City and the Respondent
2 during the Administrative Hearing were duly noted and taken under submission by the
3 Hearing Officer prior to issuing this decision.

4 Following the Administrative Hearing, the Hearing Officer requested additional
5 evidence from both the City and the Respondent via email on December 11, 2025. This
6 included, from the City:

- 7 • Bodycam Footage from Redondo Beach PD Officers from inside the store
- 8 • Narrative reports from the CDTFA Inspectors
- 9 • Photos from the CDTFA Inspectors showing product location in the store
10 prior to staging for seizure

11 From the Respondent:

- 12 • Invoices for the seized flavor banned products
- 13 • Photos or video from the store prior to products being moved/seized
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15 Ms. Johnson requested the information on behalf of the City but was unable to
16 produce the requested items. Mr. Zreik was able to provide unredacted purchase receipts
17 for a number of the products seized. The receipts contained flavor banned products with
18 purchase dates ranging from January 3, 2022 through October 21, 2022. However, Mr.
19 Zreik was not able to provide evidence that the purchased products were the same
20 products that were seized.
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22 **FINDINGS**

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24 **BASED ON THE EVIDENCE PRESENTED** and admitted into the record at the
25 Administrative Hearing on December 10, 2025, I find there are sufficient facts to
26 establish, by a preponderance of the evidence, Manhattan Beach Smoke Shop Inc.
27 violated applicable provisions of the Redondo Beach Municipal Code and California law
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1 by selling, offering for sale or possession with intent to sell banned flavored tobacco
2 products for sale.

3 The observations by Sgt. Spry support the finding that Manhattan Beach Smoke
4 Shop Inc. violated the Redondo Beach Municipal Code §5-9.205 and California law by
5 selling, offering for sale or possession with intent to sell flavored tobacco products.
6 Specifically, the testimony of Sgt. Spry unequivocally established that the availability for
7 sale of flavored tobacco products, including flavored vapes, menthol cigarettes, and
8 flavored nicotine pouches (e.g., Zyn) and other banned products were found on the
9 sales/retail floor at the time of the inspection at Manhattan Beach Smoke Shop Inc.'s
10 business location during open business hours on March 18, 2025. These findings are
11 supported by Sgt. Spry's oral testimony as well as the report regarding the seized
12 flavored tobacco products that were submitted as evidence.

13 The additional evidence submitted by Manhattan Beach Smoke Shop Inc. at the
14 request of the Hearing Officer does substantiate the prior testimony of Mr. Adamo
15 regarding the dates that maybe some of the flavored products were purchased.
16 However, none of the additional evidence provided addressed whether flavor banned
17 products were indeed on the sales floor at the time of the inspection and subsequent
18 seizure.
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20 **DECISION**

21 The sale, offer for sale, and possession with intent to sell flavored tobacco products
22 are prohibited under California law and constitute a violation of the Redondo Beach
23 Municipal Code. (Health and Safety Code Sections 104559.5(a)(17)(A)(i),
24 104559.5(a)(18), 104559.5(a)(1), and 104559.5(b)(1) and Redondo Beach Municipal
25 Code Section 5-9.205(c)).The business license is subject to revocation under the
26 authority granted to the City Manager's Office
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1 Accordingly, the Notice of Revocation issued on November 25, 2025, was justified,
2 and the permanent revocation of the business license is warranted based on the evidence
3 presented.

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5 **ORDER**

6 THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the business license issued to
7 Manhattan Beach Smoke Shop, Inc. is revoked effective immediately. Manhattan Beach
8 Smoke Shop, Inc. shall cease all operations involving the sale and display of tobacco
9 products located at 2205 Artesia Boulevard, Unit A within the City of Redondo Beach. It
10 is further ordered that Manhattan Beach Smoke Shop Inc. shall surrender the business
11 license to Redondo Beach Police Department within five business days.

12 This decision may be appealed pursuant to procedures outlined in the Redondo
13 Beach Municipal Code.

14 Representatives for both the City and Respondent agreed that this Administrative
15 Decision and Order could be issued via email, with a hard copy also being made available
16 in the City Clerk's Office.

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18 THIS ORDER IS EFFECTIVE December 19, 2025.

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20 Dated: December 19, 2025



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22 _____
23 Luke Smude
24 Administrative Hearing Officer

25 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT YOU MAY FILE AN APPEAL WITHIN TEN (10)
26 BUSINESS DAYS TO THE CITY COUNCIL. YOU SHALL REMAIN SUBJECT TO THIS
27 ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION AND ORDER DURING ANY PERIOD OF APPEAL.
28 Redondo Beach Municipal Code §6-1.27(b).