

Board: Turn off engines

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BRATTLEBORO -- Idling your vehicle for more than two minutes won't get you a traffic ticket, but may get you the evil eye.

The Selectboard accepted a non-binding resolution Tuesday night asking motorists to turn off their cars while waiting in line at the bank, fast food restaurants or at the curb.

The goal of the resolution, said Paul Cameron, the director of Brattleboro's Cities for Climate Protection Campaign, is to raise awareness "about the negative effects of vehicle idling."

"Over half of Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions come from cars and trucks," said Cameron. A compact car, idling 10 minutes a day, burns 30 gallons of fuel a year just standing still, he said. "It adds up to a lot of gas being wasted and a lot of pollution being put into the air."

One Selectboard member said he would try to be more aware of his own idling habits.

"I am a habitual offender," said Dick DeGray, to laughs from residents at the meeting. "I am going to vote for this even though I may still be an offender."

Because the resolution is not an ordinance, no enforcement by local police is necessary, but local businesses might be asked to post signs asking their customers not to idle their vehicles.

Many people are not aware of what happens to fuel efficiency and the damage they might be doing to their vehicle's engine during idling, not to mention the amount of greenhouse gases the idling produces, said Cameron.

"Idling over 10 seconds uses more gas than restarting the vehicle," he said, adding "turn off your engine whenever possible."

There are four exceptions to the 2-minute idling rule -- motors used to run refrigeration units, for repair purposes, motor vehicles "that must be kept idling in order to install, maintain or repair equipment or infrastructure" and "any situation in which the health or safety of a driver or passenger requires the idling of the vehicle."

Both the company that supplies school buses to Brattleboro and the Brattleboro Beeline have implemented no-idling policies, as has the town's department of public works, limiting idling in town-owned vehicles.

In the resolution, Cameron wrote that the benefits of anti-idling include reduced pollution and fuel consumption. The town has endorsed the "10 Percent Challenge," designed to help municipalities address their actions that contribute to global warming, which includes motor vehicle emissions as a "high-priority for the town to address," he wrote.

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