

Schools say cellphone bans help kids

Almost 1 in 4 countries has introduced them

Alia Wong and Nirvi Shah
USA TODAY

In Flint, Michigan, students will return to school after winter break with a new rule in place: Their cellphones (and hoodies) will be banned from class, largely in the name of safety.

Cellphone use is “a big part of the bullying,” Superintendent Kevelin Jones said ahead of the Flint school board’s Dec. 13 vote. “It’s a big part of the reason why our scholars are not on task in class.”

The move is part of a growing – and familiar – trend.

Bans on devices are hardly a new phenomenon: New York City public schools banned communication devices – then namely beepers – in 1988.

According to federal data, about 90% of school districts banned cellphones in the 2009-10 school year. That fell to 65% by 2015. After the pandemic, a return to in-person classes, complete with adolescents glued to their screens, led to a wave of new restrictions.

The rules are varied, and in many cases, stricter than ever – as are the consequences for rule-breakers. In Florida, for example, after a statewide ban on cellphones during instructional time was adopted this summer, at least one district in the state went a step further by prohibiting the use of cellphones during lunch and in between class periods as well.

Tweens and teens have mixed reviews of such restrictions, as do their parents. But it’s hard to design and enforce an effective policy when kids are so glued to their devices and learning is so dependent on technology – and when parents are so concerned, rightfully so, about school safety.

Lack of a universal rule on access to cellphones leads to inconsistent policies and punishment as far as who is disciplined and when, said Shahad Mohieldin, a program coordinator for the Young Women’s Project, which helps develop leadership skills in teens at 22 schools in Washington, D.C.

“Phones are a part of everyday life,” said Mohieldin, who started a Change.org petition challenging a ban at several D.C. schools.

For the teens she works with, the phone is a necessity to communicate with a parent who needs them to pick up a younger sibling from school or has another pressing concern.

And the most restrictive policies she has observed have been at schools where a large majority of students are Black or brown or from low-income families, Mohieldin said.

The imbalances in discipline are a major driving force behind the nearly 1,000 petitions on Change.org by students and parents in protest of cellphone bans at their schools.

Sophomore Brennan Stephens is among them. His school in Lake Charles, Louisiana, restricts cellphone usage



Keith Carlson retrieves his cellphone from a Yondr pouch at the end of the school day at Ellet Community Learning Center in Akron, Ohio, while safety team member Luan Haas supervises.

PHIL MASTURZO/AKRON BEACON JOURNAL FILE

from 7:43 a.m. to 3:06 p.m., he said in an email. “If we are caught using them, it’s a major infraction.” That means in-school suspension or spending a day suspended from school altogether. Yet, Stephens, 15, is adamant access to his phone is a necessity: “What if something happened at school?”

Proponents of bans say the inconvenient truth is that today’s teens may be ill-equipped to manage cellphone use on their own.

A growing body of research frames young people’s usage of cellphones, and specifically social media, as addictive and psychologically deleterious, correlating with rising rates of depression and anxiety. Last year, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory warning about the effects of social media on youth mental health.

Lawyer William Shinnoff has lined up hundreds of school districts – about 820 and counting from school systems in 32 states – that are interested in suing social media companies over their effects on students. The suits seek greater parental controls and better response when content is posted about a student that can cause harm.

But litigation takes time. For many districts, banning cellphones is a more immediate solution.

Also fueling cellphone restrictions is evidence of its harmful effects on academics. The latest results of an international standardized assessment point to significant rates of students worldwide being distracted by their own or their peers’ devices.

Even turned off but in a student’s pocket or backpack, cellphones can be detrimental, said Kathleen McNutt, the head of Bishop Ireton High School in Alexandria, Virginia. “They feel that beep and their attention span is shot,” McNutt said.

One recent Common Sense Media analysis of a small group of adolescents found they received nearly 240 cellphone notifications over the course of the day, a fourth of them during school.

A 2016 study of schools in England showed banning cellphones can have academic benefits, particularly for students who struggle in school. The body of research has

grown since then, with much of the literature suggesting such policies correlate with improved student achievement.

“There’s almost a consensus that mobile phones are hurtful” to children’s learning, said Louis-Philippe Beland, an economics professor at Canada’s Carleton University who authored the study.

A United Nations report in July concluded by recommending a global

ban on cellphones in schools. Around the world, almost 1 in 4 countries has introduced such

bans in laws or policies.

Todd Chandler has noticed improvements in his students’ mental

health and social interactions since implementing a cellphone ban this school year at Luxemburg-Casco Middle School near Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Students have to keep their devices in their lockers from first to last bell, and the school takes a five-step approach to infractions, for example, starting with a visit to the school office, followed by a chat with the family and ending, after repeated offenses, with regular check-ins with the office.

The early results have been promising, he said. Not only do students seem more engaged and connected with each other, they also seem to have acclimated to the rule.

Eighth-grader Grant Seering, 14, said he’s found the school climate is much friendlier without classmates glued to their phones. “People are talking a lot more, even with teachers. (It’s) a more fun atmosphere here,” he said. “You have to do other things, like actually talk to your friends.”

NOTICE OF LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

City Commission of the City of Haines City, Florida to Consider the Creation of the White Clay Community Development District

DATE: January 16, 2024
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: City of Haines City, City Commission Chambers, 620 E. Main Street, Haines City, Florida 33844

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 190, Florida Statutes, a public hearing will be held by the City Commission of the City of Haines City beginning at 7:00 p.m., on January 16, 2024, in the Commission Chambers, 620 E. Main Street, Haines City, Florida 33844, to consider an ordinance granting a petition to establish a community development district which may be known as the “White Clay Community Development District” (the “District”). The title of the proposed ordinance is as follows:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF HAINES CITY, FLORIDA ESTABLISHING THE WHITE CLAY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 190, FLORIDA STATUTES; PROVIDING FOR INCORPORATION OF RECITALS; PROVIDING FOR AUTHORITY; PROVIDING FOR FINDING OF FACTS; PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND NAMING OF THE DISTRICT; PROVIDING FOR THE LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTERNAL BOUNDARIES OF THE DISTRICT; PROVIDING FOR THE DESCRIPTION OF THE FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE DISTRICT; PROVIDING FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE INITIAL MEMBERS OF THE DISTRICT’S BOARD OF SUPERVISORS; PROVIDING FOR NOTICE REQUIREMENTS; PROVIDING FOR COMPLIANCE WITH ALL REMAINING SECTIONS OF CHAPTER 190, FLORIDA STATUTES, AND ALL OTHER APPLICABLE LAWS AND ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The proposed community development district is comprised of approximately 181 acres, more or less, generally located south of White Clay Pit Road, north of County Road 546 East, and west of Slocumb Road. The Petitioner has proposed to establish the White Clay Community Development District to plan, finance, acquire, construct, operate and maintain infrastructure and community facilities, which may be authorized by such districts under Florida law including but not limited to Chapter 190, Florida Statutes.

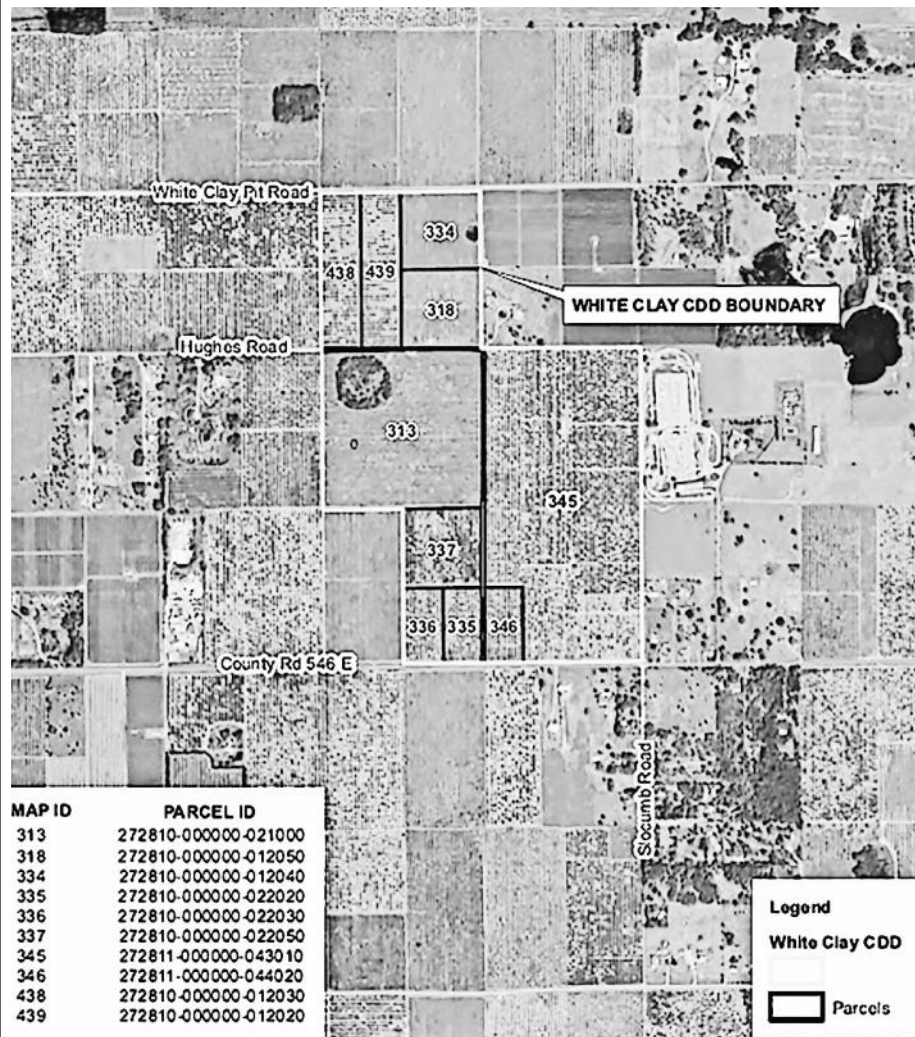
Copies of the petition, department reports and proposed ordinance are open to public inspection at the office of the City Clerk, City of Haines City, 620 E. Main Street, Haines City, Florida 33844.

All interested persons and affected units of general - purpose government shall be given an opportunity to appear at the hearing and present oral or written comments on the petition. Any persons or affected unit of general purpose local government, who wish to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at this public hearing will need a record of the proceedings. For that purpose, the person or unit of general purpose local government may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made that includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Florida Statutes, section 286.26, if you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the office of the City Clerk at 620 E. Main Street, Haines City, Florida 33844, or by phone at (863) 421-9921, not less than three business days before a hearing or meeting in order to make arrangements.

Run Dates: December 21st, December 28th, January 4th, January 11th

Location Map of White Clay Community Development District



PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE City Commission of the City of Lakeland, Florida, will consider passage of the following titled ordinance(s) at a City Commission meeting which commences at 9:00 A.M. on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, in the City Commission Chamber at City Hall, Lakeland, Florida:

- PROPOSED 24-001; AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKELAND, FLORIDA RELATING TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING; PROVIDING FOR TEXT AMENDMENT CPA23-004 TO THE LAKELAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; OUR COMMUNITY 2030; AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO REVISE MAP FLU-7, TRANSIT ORIENTED CORRIDORS; MAKING FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
- PROPOSED 24-002; AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKELAND, FLORIDA RELATING TO ZONING; PROVIDING FOR TEXT AMENDMENT LDC23-002 TO ARTICLE 1 OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE TO REVISE FIGURE 1.4-1 “TRANSIT ORIENTED CORRIDORS” AND REVISE THE DEFINITION OF “TRANSIT ORIENTED CORRIDORS” IN SECTION 1.6; MAKING FINDINGS; FINDING CONFORMITY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
- PROPOSED 24-003; AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO ZONING; MAKING FINDINGS; AMENDING ORDINANCE 4850 TO PROVIDE FOR A MAJOR MODIFICATION OF PUD (PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT) ZONING IN ORDER TO ADOPT A NEW MASTER PLAN FOR THE FLORIDA BAPTIST CHILDREN’S HOME PROPERTY LOCATED AT 1015 SIKES BOULEVARD; PROVIDING CONDITIONS; FINDING CONFORMITY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
- PROPOSED 24-004; AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING; MAKING FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR SMALL SCALE AMENDMENT #LUS23-002 TO A CERTAIN PORTION OF THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP OF THE LAKELAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; OUR COMMUNITY 2030; CHANGING THE FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION ON APPROXIMATELY 3.9 ACRES LOCATED AT 3601 N. FLORIDA AVENUE FROM BUSINESS PARK (BP) TO RESIDENTIAL HIGH (RH); PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
- PROPOSED 24-005; AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO ZONING; MAKING FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR A CHANGE IN ZONING FROM D-3 (MODERATE IMPACT OFFICE) TO MF-22 (MULTI-FAMILY) ON APPROXIMATELY 3.9 ACRES LOCATED AT 3601 N. FLORIDA AVENUE; CHANGING THE CONTEXT DISTRICT FOR THE PROPERTY FROM URBAN SPECIAL PURPOSE TO URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD; PROVIDING CONDITIONS; FINDING CONFORMITY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

INTERESTED PERSONS may inspect such proposed ordinances at the City Attorney’s Office in City Hall and may appear and be heard at the meeting with respect to the proposed ordinances. Anyone deciding to appeal a decision by the City Commission on the above subject matter at this hearing will need a record of the proceedings and, for purposes of that appeal, may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made, including the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be made.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 286.26, Florida Statute, persons with disabilities needing special accommodation to participate in this proceeding, or those requiring language assistance (free of charge) should contact the City of Lakeland ADA Specialist, Kristin Meador. Because providing a reasonable accommodation may require outside assistance, organizations, or resources, the City asks that any request be made with as much notice as possible, preferably 72 hours, but no later than 48 hours in advance of the event, at: (863) 534-6040. Email: ADASpecialist@lakelandgov.net. If hearing impaired, please contact the TDD numbers: Local – (863) 834-8333 or 1-(800) 955-8771 (TDD) – Telecommunications Device for the Deaf or the Florida Relay Service number: 1-(800) 955-8770 (VOICE), for assistance.

KELLY S. KOOS
City Clerk
City of Lakeland, Florida

LL-38329022