

# The Asbury Park Press

## Join the conversation: Should the Belmar beach and boardwalk be smoke-free?

Paul Williams, Mar. 6, 2014 8:38 AM

**BELMAR** — The borough beach may be going smoke-free this summer.

Mayor Matt Doherty said at the Borough Council meeting on March 4 that the council will vote on a resolution to ban smoking along the boardwalk and on the beach at its next meeting on March 18.

Currently, the borough has several small smoking zones near the boardwalk, but the council will move to eliminate those in an effort to make the borough's shoreline more family-friendly, Doherty said.

"We're sort of catching up with some other beaches on this, to be completely 100 percent smoke-free," he said, noting that other beaches in the area such as Spring Lake, Seaside Park and Seaside Heights also prohibit smoking along their beachfronts.

Doherty added that a smoking ban would help reduce litter along the beachfront and make it easier for law enforcement to enforce the smoking ban because it will eliminate any gray areas near the existing designated smoking areas.

Doherty said after the meeting that he doesn't believe the resolution would deter patrons from attending the borough's beaches this summer.

"I was in touch with (Mayor) Bill Aker in Seaside, which is a bigger beach than us and has more beachgoers, and they didn't see any impact from (their smoking ban). We think if anything, it enhances us as a family-friendly destination," he said. "There's already pending legislation in front of the general assembly in New Jersey that would ban smoking in all parks and beaches anyway."

The council discussed several other enhancements to the borough's beachfront for the summer, including implementing free WiFi and hosting picture contests through social-media networks to help promote the beach to the surrounding area. Cellphone charging stations, water bottle re-filling stations, more bike racks and more toddler-friendly play areas in each of the beachfront playgrounds will be added.

"We want to continue to improve the beach operations. It's all part of that experience that draws middle-class families from throughout New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania," Doherty said.

The council also approved a resolution to allow the bidding April 1 for two concession spaces for the summer along the 10th Avenue and 13th Avenue boardwalk.

The concessions can consist of food trucks parked parallel to the boardwalk or a trailer on the sand. Unlike last year, the borough will not pay to have the concession trailers moved to the winning bidder's desired location.

"We're not really in a financial position to do that," Doherty said.

Business Administrator Colleen Connolly said the borough will provide power pedestals to the concession sites so residents and beachgoers won't have to worry about hearing a loud generator buzzing. Bidding will start at \$1,500 per month

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