

# Mount Holly considering smoking ban in public parks, playgrounds

By Rose Krebs Staff writer | Posted: Tuesday, April 30, 2013 9:30 am

MOUNT HOLLY — Mount Holly could be the next town to ban smoking in municipal-owned playgrounds and parks.

The Township Council has yet to take action, but will discuss a possible ordinance at a work session at 7 p.m. Monday at the municipal building.

If the governing body decides to move forward, the ordinance may be introduced at its May 13 meeting.

According to a draft ordinance, the aim is to “preserve the cleanliness of parks and playgrounds” and “benefit the public health, safety and welfare” of residents.

At a recent meeting, Councilman Jason Jones asked that the action be considered.

“I think the smoking ban will benefit the public health, safety and welfare for all who utilize the playgrounds and parks,” Jones said.

Township Solicitor George Saponaro used other communities’ ordinances when compiling the draft.

The number of municipalities establishing smoking bans at public parks and playgrounds across the state continues to grow. In Burlington County, Beverly, Burlington Township, Delran, Edgewater Park, Mansfield and Palmyra have bans.

Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy, a nonprofit based in Summit, Union County, has been helping municipalities interested in establishing prohibitions. According to officials at the organization, about a third of the state’s 566 towns have placed smoking restrictions at public parks and recreation areas.

But there has been a backlash from other groups, which argue that there is no evidence that smoking outdoors is harmful to others and that smokers have rights.

Mayor Richard Dow said he would like to have more discussion about limiting the smoking prohibition to posted areas in parks and recreation areas. Dow said the restrictions could be placed in areas that have a lot of people, such as playgrounds or near bleachers.

Jones agreed that discussion at the work session should include whether to designate some areas for smokers.

There also has been some back and forth on whether to include the township gazebo on High Street in the ban. Jones would like to see a smoking restriction there. The council will need to decide what areas to include before finalizing the ordinance.

As proposed in the draft ordinance, the smoking ban would apply to Mill Dam/Iron Works Park, Monroe Street Park, Chestnut Street Park, and all other township-owned recreation areas.

Violators would be subject to fines that would be determined by the municipal court.