

# Global Advisory group lobbies Hackensack council for new policy

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HACKENSACK - Global Advisory for Smokefree Policy (GASP) members brought forth the request for city parks to become smoke free. - See more at:

GASP is a non-profit that promoting smoke-free air and tobacco-free lives.

During the Council of the Whole meeting on Jan. 28, Cindy Meakem, part of the Tobacco Free for a Healthy New Jersey initiative which partnered with GASP, said that converting city parks into smoke-free areas would be beneficial from a health standpoint.

"Our coalition was asked by the state to go out to communities like yours and try and promote smoke-free parks, to help promote healthy living for children and residents in your area," she said.

GASP Executive Director Karen Blumenfeld, who also addressed the dais, further contended that the initiative would be beneficial across the board.

"Second-hand smoke can be very harmful to people, especially those that have a sensitivity or to children," Blumenfeld said. "Another benefit is an economic benefit and an environmental benefit. Usually tobacco waste like cigarette butts are the number one or the number two cause of litter in park and recreation yard areas. So you will probably see a decline in litter, which hopefully translates into less costs for your community picking up the cigarette butts."

Al Ferrara, from the Bergen County Department of Health Services, who is also aiding in this initiative further explained the cause's goal.

"Our department administers a grant from the New Jersey Department of Health Office of Cancer Control and Prevention," he said. "It's a Bergen-Hudson Chronic Disease Control Coalition ... one of the current preventions that the state has asked us to implement, and do the best we possibly can, is

again facilitate the adoption of these smoke-free ordinances."

Though Ferrara said that the initiative would like to prohibit smoking overall, the main goal of the project is to try "to change the culture in regards to the whole aspect of smoking."

"Obviously, we'd like to prohibit smoking," Ferrara continued. "But [the initiative] is also so the youth doesn't get mixed messages in regards as to whether smoking is allowed in the home or not, or again if they go out to recreate to a park or recreation area, they get confused because they see an adult there on a park bench smoking."

According to both Meakem and Blumenfeld, there are currently 23 communities in Bergen County who have adopted the measure in their parks.

"We've been quite successful," Meakem said. "There are 23 towns and cities in Bergen County that had this initiative brought to their communities. We started working in Paterson. Paterson was one of the first ones [communities] to pass this ordinance. They're the third largest municipality in New Jersey. In October we had the pleasure of working in Jersey City — which is the second largest — and they also passed this initiative."

Feedback from the governing body regarding smoke-free parks was positive.

"I'm in favor of this especially in our parks where our children and other people interact," Mayor John Labrosse said. "It's a no brainer...it just makes sense. This is something we should discuss and move forward with."

Councilman Leonardo "Leo" Battaglia and Deputy Mayor Kathleen Canestrino also voiced their support for the initiative.

"I am in favor, too," Battaglia said. "As a soccer coach, I don't want to see the kids do it. I don't smoke myself. Never did."

With a shared consensus among the governing body, Labrosse told the presenters that the Mayor and Council would further discuss the initiative and "hopefully" approve it in the near future.

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