

HACKENSACK CHRONICLE

Officials ban smoking in Hackensack parks and municipal buildings

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HACKENSACK — Individuals will face hundreds of dollars in fines if caught smoking in public parks and municipal buildings now that the governing body passed an ordinance banning the habit from these locations.

Citing health and safety risks, the governing body passed the ordinance at the March 4 Council meeting.

According to the ordinance, smoking is prohibited in municipal buildings and "within a 35-foot radius of the front entrance of all municipal buildings."

In addition, individuals are banned from smoking in all public parks and recreational facilities owned or leased by the city.

Cindy Meakem, part of the Tobacco Free for a Healthy New Jersey initiative, which partnered with Global Advisory for Smokefree Policy (GASP), thanked the governing body for passing the ordinance restricting smoking including electronic cigarettes.

"I also see that you added electronic cigarettes in there," she said. "I don't know if people are aware but individuals are figuring out how to use them to smoke cocaine, heroin and marijuana. So a lot of towns that are going forward with [smoke-free ordinances] are adding that on to be proactive. I just want to commend you and thank you because you've all been great to work with."

Anyone caught in violation of the smoke-free ordinance will face a \$250 fine for the first offense, \$500 for the second and \$1,000 for each additional offense.

GASP presented the smoke-free proposal to city leaders at the Jan. 28 public meeting.

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

GASP Executive Director Karen Blumenfeld 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 during the January meeting. "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 aided in this initiative 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."

According to GASP, Hackensack will join 23 Bergen County municipalities who also have 100 percent smoke-free parks, including Tenafly and South Hackensack.

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<http://www.northjersey.com/news/health-news/officials-proclaim-parks-municipal-buildings-smoke-free-1.740750>