

Most Maplewood officials support smoking ban

- Posted by [News-Record](#) on January 6, 2012 at 10:00am
- [View Blog](#)

By Philip Sean Curran, *Staff Writer*

Maplewood will seek this year to join hundreds of other communities nationwide that have banned smoking in all their public parks.

A majority of the Township Committee on Jan. 3 signaled a willingness to support such a prohibition. The township already prohibits smoking at its swimming pool and in government buildings.

The move is aimed at reducing the exposure to second-hand smoke.

Mayor Vic De Luca voiced his support for the proposed ban, one that would extend to the curb line of parks, such that someone could not be smoking while walking on the sidewalk around Memorial Park, for example.

Officials also will seek to ban smoking at outdoor events the township or the two special improvement district sponsor, such as the Mayfest street fair on Springfield Avenue.

They had been contemplating a more modest smoking ban to only cover child play areas in the parks.

On Jan. 3, Dr. Fred M. Jacobs, former commissioner of the state Department of Health and Senior Services, briefed officials on the health risks associated with second-hand smoke.

Addressing them in their capacity as the local Board of Health, Jacobs said anywhere from 45,000 to 50,000 nonsmokers die in the U.S. annually from exposure to second-hand smoke.

He said the figure is more than all the Americans killed in the Korean War

or those killed in motor vehicle accidents each year.

Jacobs weighed in against having segregated smoking areas in a park by noting that smoke “doesn’t know the boundary.”

Maplewood health officer Robert D. Roe said that he felt Jacobs made a “compelling presentation.” Rather than have a ban only in play areas, Roe recommended officials enact a total ban for all parks.

Representatives of Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy, a Summit-based anti-smoking advocacy group, were on hand for the meeting and addressed officials.

A white paper the group provided officials showed that 574 municipalities nationwide prohibit smoking in all their parks.

Township Committeeman Jerry Ryan and Committeewoman India R. Larrier each raised concerns about the township being able to enforce such a measure.

Philip Sean Curran can be reached at 908-686-7700, ext. 116, or at newsrecord@thelocalsource.com.