

# Closter to weigh ban on smoking - NorthJersey.com

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BY STEPHANIE SIMONE

STAFF WRITER

THE RECORD

A proposal has been made to ban smoking at recreational areas in Closter by Councilman Arthur Dolson, who has recently been diagnosed with emphysema.

Dolson, liaison to the Board of Health, told the council at its meeting in late August that he has never smoked, but he said secondhand smoke can be just as dangerous – even outdoors. “Many of us have had that experience where you walk out of a non-smoking building into a bunch of smokers. This is an initiative for people who are uncomfortable with this situation,” Dolson said.

Right now the proposal is still in the planning stages, but it would cover lighted cigarettes, cigars, pipes and electronic cigarettes. The ban would affect all parks and recreational areas, including Memorial Field, Ruckman Field, Schaubel Field and Mollicone Field.

“This initiative would be good for young people so they do not emulate smoking,” Dolson said.

Dolson heard favorable feedback from the Closter Board of Health and from the town council. “The ordinance committee will review it, acquire like ordinances from surrounding areas, and then we will draft our own version of it,” Dolson said.

Once this process is in motion, there will be a presentation to the council. When that is done, the presentation will also be passed on to various boards for their reaction. Eventually the initiative will go up for a public hearing, then a vote.

It is unclear what penalties will be proposed. Dolson has made it clear that while Closter would benefit from this initiative, punishment is not the answer.

“I would like to encourage people to stop smoking rather than punish them,” Dolson said. He thinks no-smoking signs in these designated public places may be sufficient enough.

Paramus had taken a similar stance back in 2011. More than 100 municipalities statewide have similar laws.

The Paramus ordinance covers lighted cigarettes, cigars, pipes and electronic cigarettes within the boundaries of “smoke-free zones,” which are borough public areas. Areas that are included have signs advising visitors about their status. Penalties range from a fine of

\$50 to \$100 for the first violation, \$100 to \$200 for the second violation, and \$200 to \$500 for the third and subsequent violations.

New Jersey is behind only California for the number of municipalities with smoking ordinances. New York City has also banned smoking in all its public parks, Long Branch recently banned smoking on all public beaches, and Seaside Park banned smoking on all beaches, boardwalks and recreational areas, said Karen Blumenfeld, executive director of New Jersey Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy (NJGASP).

Email: [simone@northjersey.com](mailto:simone@northjersey.com)

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