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Smoking Ban in Parks Ordinance Introduced by Maywood Council

Susan Joy Clark, April 16, 2014

The Maywood Council on April 8 introduced an ordinance that bans smoking in public parks and recreation areas.

The council voted unanimously in favor of it, although two council members, Tom Lindenau and Derek Eisenberg, were absent for the vote.

At a council meeting on April 1, Mayor Gregg Padovano gave some reasons behind the ordinance.

"We don't want to set a bad example for the children," said the mayor. "Secondhand smoke is a danger to children. There is a massive amount of cigarette litter (in the parks). It's a way to have the parks be enjoyed by everyone and avoid a hazardous situation for everyone."

At the April 8 meeting, resident John Brown spoke to the council, explaining his objections to the ordinance.

"Let me preface my statements by saying I have never smoked a cigarette, cigar, pipe, pot... I don't care what it is. No smoke has ever entered these lungs. I'm not coming from that direction. I'm opposed to this resolution," said Brown.

Brown asked the council to consider not passing it. He listed three reasons why the council was considering the ban: the litter problem, the effect on youth and the health issue of secondhand smoke.

"I won't argue the youth piece of it. Frankly, I think there's a lot of things that can be done through parenting rather than having government agencies tell us what to do and what is bad for our kids and inflicting that upon what I consider the rights of other people to smoke," said Brown.

On the litter issue, Brown said, "Cigarette butts in parks and things like that, that's a litter issue. That's not a smoking issue. That's enforcement of the litter laws, and if it takes giving fines to people for throwing butts in the park, then so be it. I don't think you really need to outlaw smoking, just like you wouldn't outlaw newspapers in parks if people started to throw those."

Brown stated that he thought the health part was the main issue.

"Frankly, we all know that secondhand smoke in closed environments is very detrimental to your health," he said. "That's proven scientifically. The problem is that in an outdoor environment, that hasn't been proved. In fact, the evidence shows that either there hasn't been enough study or that there really isn't anything inflicting on other people's health from smoking outdoors."

Brown mentioned former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's attempted ban on sodas as another type of overregulation by the government.

After Brown spoke, **Cara Murphy, from the non-profit organization, Global Advisors on Smoke-Free Policy, said a few words in favor of the ordinance.**

Murphy shared that 236 communities in New Jersey as well as many counties had bans on smoking in public parks and recreation areas.

"As you know, the Assembly just passed a bill, A108, that would basically make parks and recreation areas throughout the state smoke-free including beaches. The Senate's companion bill to that is coming forward for a vote, so it's still up in the Senate. The Assembly did vote in favor of

that," said Murphy.

The ordinance is set to be adopted after a second vote at an upcoming meeting.

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