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Hackensack Bans Smoking in Public Parks

Hannan Adely, March 4, 2014

HACKENSACK – Smoking will no longer be permitted in city parks and recreation areas under an ordinance adopted Tuesday.

The measure, which the City Council approved unanimously, also bans smoking within 35 feet of all municipal buildings.

The smoking ban covers cigars, cigarettes and pipes, as well as the "inhaling or exhaling of smoke or vapor from an electronic smoking device."

The policy sets a healthy example for children and protects people from secondhand smoke, supporters said. They also argued that it enhances parks by preventing fires and reducing tobacco litter.

Global Advisors for Smokefree Policy, a non-profit group that promotes smoke-free policies around the state, had asked the council to consider the ban. Karen Blumenfeld, executive director of NJ GASP, said the measure was fitting for Hackensack because the city was a leader in tobacco-control efforts nearly two decades ago when it banned the sale of smoking products in self-service vending machines. The federal government passed a similar ban 14 years later, she said.

Smokers who violate the new rules in Hackensack can be fined \$250 for the first offense, \$500 for the second and \$1,000 for three or more offenses. GASP will provide free signs to Hackensack that read "Breathe Easy: This public property is 100 percent smoke-free" to hang in parks and recreation areas.

Smoke-free parks are a growing trend in municipalities across New Jersey. In Bergen County, 23 other towns and cities have bans in place, and statewide there are 220 municipalities with bans, Blumenfeld said.

"This policy helps young people by normalizing smoke-free policies," she said. "We are looking to impact large populations. Clearly Hackensack is a densely populated area, so this will affect many people in a positive way."

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