

# Closter approves measure to ban smoking in parks

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CLOSTER - Borough officials have approved an ordinance to ban smoking in the town's public parks by a 3-2 vote Wednesday citing concerns for second-hand smoke posing a health hazard to people and the environment.

The mandate, effective immediately, establishes smoke free zones in more than a dozen parks. It also prohibits vehicles in areas that include parklands, parkways, park areas and playgrounds, according to the ordinance.

"I believe that it is basically unenforceable," said Councilman John Glidden, who opposed the measure adding that he believed it was not well-thought out.

"We have too many ordinances in this country," Glidden said. "When they become unenforceable I don't think its proper to pass an ordinance of this kind."

But Karen Blumenfeld, Executive Director of New Jersey Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy, said the law would reduce the likelihood of children starting to smoke and protect outdoor areas from smoking waste, which would reduce maintenance costs.

The ordinance was approved at the borough's monthly mayor and council meeting.

Resident and Recreation Commission Director Jim Oettinger told the council that it was unfair to only target parks and that it would put an additional burden on police.

"Will they be bagging cigarette butts for DNA samples to capture Mr. Jones who was smoking a cigarette," Oettinger said in a statement.

"If you want to do something, you should ban it completely in town," Oettinger told the council.

Smoking in park areas is punishable by a \$90 fine. It is unclear how the law would be enforced, but the ordinance requires "Smoke Free Zone" signs to be placed along park properties.

Closter becomes the eleventh town in Bergen County to ban smoking in parks following Carlstadt, East Rutherford, Elmwood Park, Franklin Lakes, Lyndhurst, Mahwah, Moonachie, Paramus, Ridgefield and River Vale, according to Blumenfeld.

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