

Ocean City parks and recreation areas are smoke-free

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Public wants smoke-free beaches, too

OCEAN CITY — All city-owned parks and recreation areas in Ocean City will now be smoke-free after City Council unanimously passed an ordinance Thursday, Sept. 26.

The ordinance was brought forward by Councilmen Antwan McClellan and Scott Ping after a presentation from the Ocean City Mayor's Advisory Council on Physical Fitness and Sports at the Aug. 22 council meeting.

Kathy Sykes, chairwoman of the advisory council, presented the "Breathe Easy Campaign" along with council members and Kim Burns, southern regional coordinator for Tobacco Free for a Healthy New Jersey. The campaign includes the smoking ban, as well as signage and other initiatives that will advertise the dangers of smoking and secondhand smoke.

At the time, Burns said that in Cape May County, there is a higher percentage of teenage smokers than the state average. She said that many towns in the county are not smoke-free, but statewide, there are 300 smoke-free towns and counties.

At Thursday's council meeting, both members of the public and council were in favor of the ordinance.

"I would like to thank you for passing the law of not smoking in sports areas," said Sean Zellers, 13, of Ocean City, after the ordinance received council's support.

"We are in support of the ordinance. We have signs that we can provide to the city," said Dr. Bob Slotner of Northfield and Atlantic Prevention Resources.

Signs will be posted at the locations listed in the ordinance to remind people that they're 100-percent smoke-free areas. For the first offense, a penalty of \$100-\$250 will be assessed. For the second offense, there is a penalty of not less than \$500 and no more than \$1,000. The Ocean City Police are charged with enforcement. **Electronic cigarettes are included in the definition of smoking.**

Councilman Mike DeVlieger asked that the police start enforcement with a warning period. "It's not about generating revenue, it's about stopping that habit around the kids," he said, to which council agreed.

Stephanie Barsamian of 37th Street and Central Avenue and Wendi Smith of 58th and Asbury both asked that council consider an ordinance that would ban smoking on the city's beaches. Council agreed to look into the issue further.

Many shore towns in New Jersey have banned smoking on the beach, including Seaside Park, Lavallette and Somers Point. There is also currently a bill in the New Jersey legislature that would ban smoking at all state beaches.

<http://www.shorenewstoday.com/snt/news/index.php/ocean-city-general-news/44518-ocean-city-parks-and-recreation-areas-are-smoke-free.html>