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Woodcliff Lake looks to make parks smoke-free

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PASCACK VALLEY COMMUNITY LIFE

Woodcliff Lake's parks and recreation areas may soon become smoke-free territory.

In a meeting last month with the borough's board of health, the Bergen County Integrated Municipal Advisory Council - a coalition of tobacco control experts - presented the health, environmental and economic benefits of having full smoke-free coverage in their parks and recreational areas. Town officials are onboard with the self-enforcing policy, and a smoke-free ordinance is slated for introduction on April 7, according to Councilman Carlos Rendo, council liaison to the Board of Health.

"The board of health agreed [that] 100 percent of the recreation area should be smoke-free... to promote the health of individuals to allow them to be in recreation areas and not be disturbed and to keep a clean and healthy society," Rendo said.

Currently, Woodcliff Lake has an ordinance in place under "Parks and Playground" in the Borough Code, adopted in 1999, that places a partial ban on smoking on ball fields, the spectator area, the pool area at the Old Mill, and on school property. A new ordinance, however, would provide 100 percent coverage to restrict smoking in all its parks and recreational areas. The benefits, according to the advisory council, include promoting a healthy example for children to reduce their likelihood of picking up the habit, protecting all individuals from secondhand smoke, protecting government property from preventable fires, and reducing maintenance costs by minimizing tobacco litter in recreational areas.

So far, 23 Bergen County towns have smoke-free ordinances in place from Wood-Ridge to Wyckoff. If adopted, Woodcliff Lake would be joining River Vale and Westwood from the Pascack Valley, who also have an ordinance in place, according to the advisory council.

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