

## Cape May won't ban smoking on beaches this summer

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By RICHARD DEGENER Staff Writer

CAPE MAY — City Council will consider creating smoke-free beaches in 2012, but it does not plan to take any action this year.

Council listened to a presentation Tuesday from Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy, or GASP, before making a decision to do more research.

Karen Blumenfeld, of GASP's office in Summit, Union County, outlined efforts to make other outdoor areas smoke-free, from beaches in Belmar, Monmouth County, to public places in New York City. She urged Cape May to take the strongest action possible.

Deputy Mayor Jack Wichterman initiated the idea, suggesting that smoking should only be allowed on one third of the city's beaches.

"We really don't want to chase people out of town. We want to come to some conclusion that is acceptable. What do you suggest?" Wichterman asked.

Blumenfeld pushed for no smoking on the strand or The Promenade.

"They can smoke on the sidewalks and other areas," Blumenfeld said.

Blumenfeld contended that levels of secondhand smoke outside can equal or exceed levels in an indoor environment. She said this is especially bad for children with asthma and the elderly. She said cigarette butts are toxic to the environment and sometimes children pick them up and put them in their mouth.

"It's not good for little kids, babies and birds," Blumenfeld said, noting it can take 15 years for the butts to disintegrate.

Council discussed creating a smoking area at each beach, possibly next to The Promenade, but Blumenfeld said non-smokers would have to walk through this area on the way to the water and would be "affected by this smoke."

Wichterman said Seaside Heights allows smoking on the first 25 feet of beach, but it is outlawed from there to the water. Blumenfeld said nonsmokers would walk through high concentrations of smoke.

"We feel a 100 percent ban is easier to enforce. Our preference is to see 100 percent," Blumenfeld said.

Enforcement issues, such as police coming onto the beach to enforce the ban, were discussed. Councilman William Murray said he favored smoking restrictions but wanted police to initially give out warnings and not tickets that carry fines.

Blumenfeld said cigar smoke is worse than cigarettes. She said one cigar emits the same carcinogens as an entire pack of cigarettes.

Council discussed what signage would be needed. Blumenfeld said she would look into giving the city some free brochures.

Councilwoman Deanna Fiocca said she conducted an informal computer poll on the issue and had about 60 replies.

"Only two were negative. I don't see how making our beaches smoke-free would be detrimental," Fiocca said.

One concern is whether it would impact tourism. Blumenfeld said beach tag sales rose in Belmar after smoking restrictions were enacted, though she acknowledged there may have been other factors.

Kim Burns, of Atlantic Prevention Resources, also pushed for the ban. She said her group is funded by

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state grants to fight tobacco in seven southern New Jersey counties.

"I'm coming more from the prevention side, preventing our kids from starting smoking," Burns said.

The meeting was just a work session for council to gather information. Wicherman promised to keep Blumenfeld and Burns apprised of the city's plans.

"We're still in the discussion phase. We're talking about implementing it in 2012, not this year," Wicherman said.

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