

It'll be the law: Passaic city grounds to go smoke-free

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PASSAIC — Smoking is prohibited in all municipal buildings, parks, and recreation areas under a sweeping ordinance adopted by the City Council on Tuesday night.

The ordinance, adopted 5-0, bans smoking inside all city-owned buildings and within a 35-foot radius of the front entrance. It also prohibits smoking inside and outside of all recreational facilities run by the city, and in all public parks.

Councilman Terence Love and Jose “Joe” Garcia were absent for the vote.

“It’s a big step for a better quality of life,” said Mayor Alex D. Blanco. “This will prevent kids from seeing people smoking and protect them from secondhand smoke.”

The council held an elaborate ceremony before voting on the bill. It was attended by city children as well as Dr. Fred Jacobs, a former commissioner for the New Jersey Department of Health under Gov. Jon Corzine. The council presented certificates to about a dozen children who completed the “Kick Butts 2012” program.

Before the vote, Jacobs addressed the council, ticking off a litany of ills concerning smoking and children. Jacobs noted that 17 percent of New Jersey high school students smoke, according to the latest health department study. That translates into 168,000 children in New Jersey who will die prematurely from smoking, he said.

Jacobs said that on average, 300 children start smoking in the United States each day.

“Think about that,” he told the council. “Three hundred kids a day start something that will lead to their premature death.”

Jacobs said that banning smoking in public places is important because “kids are influenced by the conduct of adults. A 100 percent smoke-free policy sends a clear message that smoking is never an acceptable norm.”

The new anti-smoking law takes effect in 20 days after it is published in the newspaper and should be in effect by mid-August.

A first-time offender is subject to a fine of \$250. For a second offense, the fine is \$500, and it is \$1,000 for every violation thereafter. The bill also says that municipal employees who violate the ban “may be subject to discipline” under the city code.

The ban on smoking at recreational facilities includes all basketball courts and playgrounds. The measure prohibits either the “exhalation or inhalation” of smoke or “vapor” from cigarettes, cigars, pipes or “electronic smoking devices.” The ban extends to all driveways and parking areas that serve playgrounds and recreational facilities.

The smoking ban adopted Tuesday night is part of a statewide campaign run by a Summit-based non-profit group, Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy (GASP). The group’s goal is to get each of New Jersey’s 566 municipalities to adopt smoking bans on public property.

Passaic is the 12th municipality in Passaic County to adopt the ban. The others are Bloomingdale, Clifton, Haledon, Hawthorne, Little Falls, Paterson, Prospect Park, Ringwood, Wanaque, West Milford and Woodland Park.

http://www.northjersey.com/news/Itll_be_the_law_Passaic_city_grounds_to_go_smoke-free.html?page=all