

Smoking banned in public areas in Spotswood

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SPOTSWOOD — The Borough Council narrowly passed an ordinance during its July 15 meeting that bans smoking in public parks, playgrounds, recreation areas and municipal properties.

Council President Ed Seely and Councilman Curt Stollen voted to oppose the ordinance. Council members Frank LoSacco, Margaret Drozd and Nicholas Legakis voted to support it.

Several residents took the stand at the meeting to support the ordinance.

“I think the best thing you can do for young people is to limit their exposure to smoking, and one way to do that is to limit the number of occasions where they’re out in public and they’re observing adults engaging in the habit,” resident Mitch O’Brien said.

Steve Zmijewski of New Brunswick Avenue agreed that children should not be exposed to smoking.

“When my father was alive, he was a heavy smoker. I remember going on family trips and sitting by him as he was puffing away,” Zmijewski said. “Now I am a bronchial asthmatic, and I think it’s because of that. I don’t want our little kids to go through the same thing, so I am strongly for the ordinance.”

Resident John Berner said smokers infringed upon his rights as a nonsmoker.

“If you want to kill yourself and use the No. 1 drug in America — nicotine — that’s your choice, not mine,” he said. “I don’t want to breathe in your smoke.”

On the other hand, Stollen said the ordinance was addressing a “non-issue” in

the borough.

“I would normally be the last person to defend smoking. But this is a feel-good law that addresses a non-issue, and it’s unenforceable,” he said. “It’s just one more tick against personal freedom. Where do we stop?”

Seely was of the same opinion, saying that there were already enough regulations imposing upon Spotswood residents.

O’Brien, however, thought the effects of smoking on youths justified the ordinance’s passage.

“I understand the concern of some that government intrudes in private matters. I also know how difficult it is to quit smoking. Other than passing a kidney stone, it’s probably the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do,” he said. “... I understand that adults have the right to conduct their own affairs, but the influence on children, particularly young children, is significant, so I applaud the council for your efforts.”

The smoking ban will take effect Aug. 7.

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