

Montclair Township Council bans smoking in parks

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Are you a smoker in Montclair? Here's a tip you might like to know ... you have until Monday, May 19, to light up on your next stroll through a municipal park.

After that, your next cigarette could cost you a paycheck.

That's when Montclair's new smoking ban - approved by the Township Council on April 29 - takes effect. The ordinance prohibits smoking cigarettes, cigars and e-cigarettes in municipal-owned parks and on certain other township properties.

Violations of the law can cost a smoker \$250 for a first offense and \$500 for each additional offense.

A list of affected parks includes: Alonzo F. Bonsal Wildlife Preserve, the Bird Sanctuary on Highland Avenue, Canterbury, Christopher, Crane, Edgemont, Essex, Graz, George Washington Field, Kaveney Field, Mountainside, Nishuane, Porter, Rand, Sunset, Tuers, Watchung and Yantacaw.

The law also affects the Montclair Municipal Building, 205 Claremont Ave.; Montclair Police Department Headquarters, 647 Bloomfield Ave.; the Department of Community Services Yard, 219 North Fullerton Ave.; and the Montclair Water Bureau, 54 Watchung Ave.

Ironically, left untouched by the ordinance - for now - are the municipal fire houses, including Fire Department Headquarters at 1 Pine St.

Township Attorney Ira Karasick told The Times that the ordinance doesn't affect Essex County-owned properties such as Brookdale and Glenfield parks, which allow smoking and tobacco use.

OTHER NO-SMOKING LAWS

The newest ordinance is not Montclair's only smoking ban.

In July 2013, the Township Council passed an ordinance banning smoking on Montclair Public Library properties, as well as all municipal property within 50 feet of a library. Violations of the ordinance - which is still in effect - cost a

smoker \$50 for the first offense and \$100 for additional offenses.

According to that ordinance, enforceability lies with the municipal Police Department, the fire prevention officer, a health inspector or a code enforcement officer.

In November 2013, there was a push for a second smoking ban in Montclair which was introduced, and later tabled, by the Township Council.

That proposed ordinance would have prohibited smoking within 50 feet of playgrounds when children are at play, within 50 feet of playing fields when children are at play, and within 50 feet of anyone participating in recreation. It also would have banned smoking within 10 feet of the entrances of the Municipal Building, Municipal Court and Public Works Building.

MORE BANS TO COME?

Town officials say that there may be more smoking bans to come.

Mayor Robert Jackson said that the Township Council's Education Committee intends to take a look at the "protections in public areas around our schools."

4th Ward Councilwoman Renee Baskerville confirmed that there may be future moves to expand the ban to areas around Montclair High School.

"While we didn't add as an addendum to the resolution we just passed, we're going to definitely entertain that in the near future," Baskerville told The Times.

Baskerville also added that the council has discussed extending the smoking ban to the municipal Fire Department properties, and that she intends to raise the issue again.

"I think that we'll start with the parks, and then look at the high school and perhaps other municipal properties ... We're not going to stop here."

Read the opinions of local officials and advocates for and against smoking in municipal sites in an upcoming article.

Contact Eric Kiefer at kiefer@northjersey.com

See more at: <http://www.northjersey.com/community-news/there-will-be-no-puffing-in-the-park-1.1013918?page=all#sthash.A3HIOCI7.dpuf>