

Egg Harbor City bans smoking in most city parks

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Press of Atlantic City

EGG HARBOR CITY — Smoking is now illegal in all city parks except Lincoln Park, near the NJ Transit train station.

City Council passed an ordinance Thursday night prohibiting smoking in all swimming, picnic and playground areas at Egg Harbor City Lake, effectively restricting it to the parking lot. The ordinance also named as smoke-free Peace Pilgrim Park near City Hall, Kern Field, Rotary Park, Kaboom Park and Tennis Courts, Key Recreation Field and Chicago Avenue/Moss Mill Road Park.

“This is where (our children) are playing and being healthy,” said Jessica Rifice, chair of the Egg Harbor City Municipal Alliance, a drug and alcohol prevention program.

Rifice helped craft the ordinance. “We have preventive education in schools, and ... we have to show our children a healthy way to live,” she said.

Protecting children’s health by preventing their exposure to second-hand smoke was the primary goal, council members have said since presenting the first draft at a meeting in January.

“Children can’t make a decision about who smokes or not,” said Ordinance Committee Chair Ina Duran at the April 25 council meeting, when the ordinance was introduced. She said it was up to the city to make sure children breathe healthy air, when they are playing on city property.

But another goal is to help adults be better role models, by not smoking in front of children as often.

Kim Burns of Atlantic Prevention Resources attended the April 25 meeting to express support of the ordinance. Her agency, located in Pleasantville, administers a state grant to promote Tobacco Free for a Healthy New Jersey.

“We work hand-in-hand with towns adopting smoke-free policies,” she said, adding the seven southernmost counties in New Jersey have an average smoking rate of 20 percent, compared to 14 percent statewide. Her agency will be providing free signs to the city to install that say, “Breathe Easy: This is a Smoke-Free Zone.”

Councilwoman Hazel Mueller said Lincoln Park, off the White Horse Pike near Chicago Avenue, was not included in the ordinance because children don't play there.

Egg Harbor City code enforcement and police officers are charged with enforcing the ban. Violators will be subject to a fine not to exceed \$1,000, the ordinance said.

Statewide, at least 150 of 565 municipalities have enacted similar bans, said Karen Blumenfeld, executive director of New Jersey Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy, or GASP.

Beach smoking is banned on Somers Point's bay beaches and Lower Township's Sunset Beach, according to GASP. Smoking has been banned for years at parks and along the bike path in Northfield, Linwood and Somers Point. It is also banned in recreation areas in Ventnor and Hamilton Township, according to GASP.

Atlantic City expanded the resort's smoke-free zone to include public parks, courts and sports fields in April 2012. The ban already applied to outdoor stadiums, amphitheatres and bleachers, but not the Boardwalk.

An attempt to ban smoking on Cape May City's beaches, promenade and parks failed in 2011, in part because of fears of alienating Canadian tourists, who tend to smoke more. Ocean City bans it on most of the Boardwalk, but not the beach.

In Cumberland County, Bridgeton, Fairfield Township and Vineland restrict outdoor smoking in some areas; as do Stafford Township, Little Egg Harbor Township and Ocean Township in Ocean County, along with Beach Haven, Harvey Cedars and Long Beach Township on Long Beach Island, according to GASP.

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http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/breaking/egg-harbor-city-bans-smoking-in-most-city-parks/article_60dd693e-b913-11e2-9902-001a4bcf887a.html#.UYzIXfm15_M.email