

Wyckoff officials to hold a public hearing on proposal to ban smoking in parks

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WYCKOFF – Township officials have taken the first step to banning smoking in six township parks, citing health considerations and efforts to control litter.

The ban at parks, playgrounds or recreation areas — referred to as smoke-free areas by township committee members — would include the Wyckoff Community Park, the Pulis and Memorial fields behind Town Hall, the Gardens of Wyckoff, Russell Farms Community Park and the Larkin House Park.

It would not include the parking areas or access lanes, said township administrator Bob Shannon.

“The ordinance is overdue,” said township committee member Brian Scanlan. “Having been the coach of 24 Wyckoff recreation teams in a range of sports, I was always irritated by parents who would stand behind the bench or sit in the stands and smoke cigarette after cigarette during the games. Aside from the bad example being set, there’s no reason to subject the players and spectators to second hand smoke.”

Mayor Rudy Boonstra, who quit smoking 26 years ago, supports the policy.

“It isn’t nice (to smoke at the parks) from public health, good neighbor and litter standpoints,” Boonstra said.

Smoke-free areas at the parks and playing fields have been endorsed by both the township Board of Health and Parks and Recreation Board, Scanlan said.

The rule will be enforced through emails, electronic posting on the township site, signs at the recreational areas, and through education, township officials said.

Compliance will be primarily achieved through public information, notices, and signs, Shannon said.

The township had put the action on hold earlier this year until additional information could be gathered on what areas would be included as smoke-free and its implementation, township officials said.

According to the anti-smoking organization, New Jersey Global Advisors SmokeFree Policy, 179 municipalities in the state and nine counties, including Bergen and Passaic, have enacted laws that restrict outdoor smoking in recreational areas.

A public hearing on the proposed ban will be held Aug. 6 at Wyckoff Township Hall, 340 Franklin Ave.