

Ridgewood considering ban on smoking in parks

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RIDGEWOOD -- The village council is considering an ordinance that would designate parks in the village as smoke-free environments.

Karen Blumenfeld, the executive director of Global Advisors on Smoke-free Policy (or GASP), told the village council during its meeting on Wednesday that enacting such a mandate could cut down on litter in Ridgewood's parks as well as "second-hand smoke exposure."

Blumenfeld said that more than 140 municipalities in New Jersey have banned cigarette smoking in open public spaces. In Bergen County, 14 towns have banned smoking in parks, she said.

Smoking is also banned in Bergen County parks.

GASP, a policy center promoting smoke-free initiatives statewide, said such an ordinance could also promote a message to impressionable youth that it's not acceptable to smoke - even outside, Blumenfeld said. Blumenfeld further touted the law as a way to cut back on parks maintenance costs and potential environmental impacts, including threats discarded cigarette butts pose to wildlife.

"Your town has a good history of promoting smoke-free initiatives," Blumenfeld said, referencing an earlier law in the village barring cigarette vending machines.

Blumenfeld said that GASP could provide the village with a draft ordinance adopted by other municipalities, but said such a document could be amended to better suit the village's needs.

Blumenfeld added that if Ridgewood were to adopt the ordinance, signs promoting the ordinance would be provided to the village through a grant funded by the state's Department of Health.

Mayor Paul Aronsohn, whose only concerns involved enforcement of the ban, suggested Wednesday that the council perhaps consider banning smoking in all public places.

Aronsohn said he believed the council was in agreement about the need for such an ordinance, but that the details would need to be sorted out before the matter could go to a vote.

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