

## Phillipsburg Town Council considers smoke-free parks

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PHILLIPSBURG, N.J. -

On Tuesday night, the Phillipsburg town council decided that a work session regarding smoke-free parks was necessary.

The council members agreed to the work session after the Warren County Integrated Municipal Advisory Council (IMAC) presented evidence for the necessity of 100% smoke-free parks. IMAC, represented by Cindy Meakem, coordinator of Tobacco Free for a Healthy New Jersey, Sarah Engler of Northwest New Jersey Community Action Partnership (NORWESCAP) and Karen Blumenfeld, executive director of Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy (GASP), also offered assistance in formatting an ordinance and enacting such a policy.

The New Jersey State Department of Health offers free metal signs to designate smoke-free public property to New Jersey municipalities that completely ban smoking from public parks and recreation areas. IMAC offered the council information and assistance in accessing these free signs.

IMAC noted that smoke-free park policies rid parks of second-hand smoke, protect the health of seniors and children in public areas, lessen the presence of non-biodegradable cigarette butts and allow municipal workers to focus their energies elsewhere with less smoking paraphernalia to clean up. Smoke-free parks could possibly help prevent children from developing smoking habits.

"Kids know they can't smoke at the mall and they can't smoke at their school but when they go outside to enjoy a park, they get a mixed message," Blumenfeld said. "They get a message like, 'Oh, I guess it's ok to smoke so long as we're outside.' By creating a smoke-free park policy, it sends a very consistent message to children that it's not healthy to smoke in a park. It's healthy to be and live a smoke-free life."

Six municipalities in Warren County already have tobacco control ordinances in place. Three of them, Hackettstown, Oxford Township and White Township, have 100% smoke-free parks policies.

Bernie Fey, Jr., president of the town council, noted that many Phillipsburg parents already enact a personal smoke-free parks policy.

“When its all said and done at the end of the day, we as adults are setting an example for children so anything we can do to help that, we want to be supportive of that,” Fey said. “A lot of us up here have been involved in the little league program and things like that and I have to commend the parents. Seventeen years I have been coaching little league and I always see a lot of parents and a lot of spectators walking off the field and trying to set an example.”

The work session will take place in March. The town council will decide then how to move forward with an ordinance and enforce such a policy.

<http://www.wfmz.com/news/news-regional-newjersey/Phillipsburg-Town-Council-considers-smoke-free-parks/-/132518/18989056/-/18jw9rz/-/index.html>