

Neighborhood News - Montville Edition (The Bergen Record)

Montville Twp. considers going smoke-free outdoors

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NEIGHBOR NEWS (MONTVILLE EDITION)



April Dudzinski, an intern for Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy, presented information to the Montville Township Committee on the health, environmental, and economic advantages of making Montville a smokefree outdoor parks and recreational area.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GAIL BOTTONE

At the Montville Township Committee meeting on Tuesday, June 24, April Dudzinski, an intern for Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy (GASP) and a Montville resident, presented information to the Committee on the health, environmental, and economic advantages of making Montville a 100 percent smoke-free outdoor parks and recreational areas community.

The Committee is considering adopting an adaptation of such a policy. Committee members are not in full agreement that there should be a total ban on smoking. They may consider an ordinance allowing smoking in certain areas.

Committeewoman Deb Nielson is in favor of the 100 percent smoke-free policy.

Committeeman James Sandham said that he would like to uphold the rights of the minority and said the ordinance "has to work for everyone."

Richard Conklin agrees that "there should not be an outright ban on smoking." He would like to see a compromise.

Mayor Don Kostka would like to see no smoking on playgrounds and Deputy Mayor Scott Gallopo wants an ordinance that will try to accommodate all people.

He also was concerned about the ability to enforce such a law. He said that if the Committee adopts such an ordinance, the township must be prepared to enforce it.

No decision was made at the meeting. As it stands now, no smoking is permitted in municipal buildings, but smoking is allowed in areas far enough away of property not to offend anyone. Fred Semrau, township attorney, said that he has drafted ordinances that address this issue and will look into the matter.

GASP is a non-profit organization with a mission of promoting smoke-free air and tobacco-free lives. Dudzinski spoke about the 2006 New Jersey Smoke-free Air Act that has had an impact on New Jersey communities and public health. According to the Act, all K-12 public and private school properties, including outdoors, must be smoke free. It ensures that workers have a safe, smoke-free workplace, and that all nonsmokers, including children and senior citizens, can breathe smoke-free air in public places.

In Morris County, there are 12 municipalities that have 100 percent smoke-free park ordinances. They are: Boonton, Butler, Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, Denville, Hanover, Jefferson, Long Hill, Madison, Mount Arlington, Mount Olive, and Rockaway Township. Parsippany has a partial policy.

Dudzinski, who has a degree in community health education and foods and nutrition, explained that Montville would receive incentives for adopting a 100 percent smoke-free parks policy such as receiving free signage to label such areas as smoke free. Also if Montville goes along with this policy, it will receive 10 points in becoming a Sustainable Jersey town.

Outdoor smoke-free recreational environments align with community efforts to promote "going green." Dudzinski said that "90 percent of people start smoking before the age of 21, so smoke-free environments discourage such behavior, as well as encourage people who want to quit."

She continued to say, "Smoking is the number-one cause of preventable disease and death. Any second-hand smoke, whether inside or outside, is a trigger for asthma, and one in 10 children has asthma."

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