

NorthJersey.Com/The Record **Norwood weighs park smoking ban**

Emma Hinchliffe, June 27, 2014

NORWOOD — The borough may become the 30th Bergen County municipality to ban smoking in parks and other public areas.

The council was divided about an ordinance that would ban all forms of smoking, including e-cigarettes, in public parks as well as on sidewalks and in wooded areas. Some council members see the ordinance as instituting too much government oversight, and others brought up concerns of enforcement for the borough's 16-officer Police Department.

The borough is using a Tenafly ordinance as a model, which calls for fines of up to \$200 for violators. A Board of Health subcommittee will review the proposal and submit a recommendation, the council decided Wednesday evening.

So far, 248 communities in the state ban smoking in all parks, including 29 in Bergen County. Burlington, Hudson, Passaic and Union counties ban smoking in parks entirely. Thirty-eight Bergen County municipalities limit outdoor smoking to some degree.

Some of Norwood's wooded areas are part of the Meadowlands Conservation Trust Fund, a protected area of land. The trust would be in favor of an ordinance banning public smoking, said Deborah Lawlor, a spokeswoman for the trust.

Albert Ferrara, community tobacco program coordinator for the Bergen County Department of Health Services, and Karen Blumenfeld, executive director of Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy, a tobacco control policy and legal resource center, urged the council to support the measure.

"When they go to the park, kids congregate there, and when people smoke there, it sends mixed messages," Blumenfeld said.

In addition to health concerns, smoke-free policies also reduce litter and preventable fires, Blumenfeld said.

"As a health care professional for 20 years, I have to support this," Councilman Joseph Ascolese said.

And while most council members supported the proposal, there was some dissent.

Councilman Barry Scott said he opposed including sidewalks and wooded areas, which are near some residents' property, and the ban on e-cigarettes.

"Is that draconian? Where are we going with this?" Scott asked during the discussion. He said he would not support the ordinance unless it were modified.

Councilman Allen Rapaport, the police commissioner, said he was concerned about enforcement.

"It creates a huge burden on the court," Rapaport said.

Blumenfeld said most municipalities have questions about enforcement before passing similar ordinances.

"If this policy prevents one child from starting to smoke, then the mayor and council have made a tremendous difference in that person's life," she said.

- See more at: <http://www.northjersey.com/news/norwood-weighs-park-smoking-ban-1.1042691#sthash.wH2IUI8v.dpuf>