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Montville Township Committee addresses smoking in parks, underage drinking

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NEIGHBOR NEWS (MONTVILLE EDITION)

On Tuesday, Sept. 9, the Montville Township Committee voted to go forward in introducing two new controversial ordinances at its next meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 23. One is an ordinance regarding smoking in public parks and recreational areas, and the other ordinance concerns underage drinking. The public hearings will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 14.

Committeewoman Deb Nielson asked Chief of Police Rudy Appelmann to come to the Oct. 14 meeting to explain the underage drinking laws and to answer questions from the public.

Health Officer John Wozniak, Jr. wrote a letter to the Township Committee saying that the Montville Board of Health would endorse an ordinance that would establish 100 percent smoke-free township parks and recreational facilities as presented by April Dudzinski, a spokesperson for the Global Advisors on Smoke-Free Policy (GASP).

From the discussion, it appears that Committeemen Richard Conklin and James Sandham are not in favor of 100 percent smoke-free parks and recreation facilities but would endorse designated smoking areas. Sandham proposed that the Recreation Department be asked for its input as to where to designate these smoking areas.

As for the underage drinking ordinance, there was much debate as to why it was needed and if it will infringe on homeowner rights. The ordinance would give the police more flexibility in handling suspicions of underage drinking. Deputy Mayor Scott Gallopo said that the ordinance is not to take the place of good parenting, but "the benefits of the ordinance outweigh some of the concerns."

Conklin is opposed to the ordinance, believing it would infringe on parents' and homeowners' rights. The ordinance would allow a police officer, who has probable cause, to enter and search someone's house. As it is now, if an underage

person is found guilty of drinking, he would face a criminal charge. With the ordinance, he would face a much lesser charge against the local law. Mayor Don Kostka believes the ordinance in the long run would save lives since it would deter drinking and driving.

Township Attorney Fred Semrau wrote a letter to the mayor and Committee members explaining some of the history of the law. He wrote, "For many years, underage drinking on private property has been beyond the limits of the police department. Common occurrences of this activity are high school-type parties where students would have parties at a private residence, and there was alcohol served on the premises. In view that the party was in a private residence or on private property, it became difficult to prosecute such actions on a local level. Either the activity would be permitted or criminal charges, also known as 2C-type violations, would be issued against such a minor for such activity."

Further explanation of the ordinance is available on the township's website under Township Committee agenda for Sept. 9. It can be found under old business.

Tom Mazzaccaro informed the Township Committee and residents that "because of demand, the Montville VFW Post 5481 has re-opened its campaign to install a second phase of memorial bricks at the Veterans Tank Memorial at Community Park. Additional space has been allocated for 125 memorial bricks on the walkway immediately in front of the tank wall. The bricks can be ordered only by Montville residents who are military veterans themselves or relatives of a veteran living or deceased who served in the United States military."

The cost of a memorial brick is \$50, and the deadline to order one is Jan. 31, 2015. For more information e-mail tmazz2@verizon.net.

David Vozza, program manager for North Jersey Municipal Employee Benefits Fund, presented the Township Committee with a dividend check in the amount of \$80,490.45. Montville Township is a member of this fund that provides long-term solutions to controlling benefit costs while providing programs for employees and their families to obtain quality healthcare. Vozza said he is hoping to give Montville an even bigger check next year.

<http://www.northjersey.com/news/montville-township-committee-addresses-smoking-in-parks-underage-drinking-1.1089410#sthash.ISbTSh4f.dpuf>