

Bogota considers smoking ban for public parks

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BOGOTA BULLETIN

BOGOTA - In Bogota, officials are considering a ban on smoking in all public parks after the idea was put up for discussion by borough council members on Feb. 5. Nearly half of all municipalities in Bergen County have authorized such an ordinance, including nearby Little Ferry, which adopted the mandate in July 2013, and the City of Hackensack, which passed the law in March 2014.

Councilwoman Daniele Fede, the Chairwoman of the Environmental Committee and member of the Bogota Green Team, said those two groups had recently held a joint meeting, during which the topic of smoking in public parks was discussed.

The ban on smoking has the unanimous endorsement of both the Environmental Committee and the Green Team, Fede said.

Al Ferrara, a member of the Bergen County Department of Health Services and the coordinator of the Bergen-Hudson Chronic Disease Coalition Tobacco Free Initiative, advocated for the town to pass this ordinance. Ferrara hopes that eventually all towns in Bergen and Hudson counties will have parks that are 100 percent smoke free.

"The ordinance has been extremely positive," said Ferrara as he addressed the council. "One of the major reasons for this

ordinance is to try and eliminate the risks from exposure to second hand smoke, particularly outdoor second hand smoke exposure."

Ferrara cited a report by the surgeon general released in 2010 that said there are over 7,000 chemicals in each puff of a cigarette and that no level of exposure to cigarette smoke is safe. Concentrations of those chemicals can be even higher in second-hand smoke, Ferrara said.

"There are a lot of health reasons why trying to limit exposure to second hand smoke," said Ferrara. "It affords people the opportunity in the parks and recreation areas in your lovely borough are intended for, and that's for recreation, to have fun and to avoid any kind of health risks. We also want to cater to the youth and give them a positive example."

Ferrara said that the Smoke-free Air Act successfully showed children that smoking indoors was hazardous to the health of the public, but they may end up receive mixed messages if they spot a citizen lighting up in a park near their area of recreation.

"It sends a very mixed message," said Ferrara. "What we're trying to do is de-normalize tobacco usage."

Councilman Thomas Napolitano asked Ferrara what the penalties would be for a citizen that was caught smoking in a Bogota public park. Ferrara informed the council that fines are set by the municipality as it sees fit.

Ferrara noted that some towns choose to mimic the fines set in the Smoke-free Air Act, which was enacted in 2006 and prohibits smoking indoors in public places. Under that law, a first offense is \$250, while subsequent offenses are \$500 and

\$1,000. Samples ordinances can also be obtained through the Global Advisors on Smoke-Free Policy (GASP).

Another tobacco-related ordinance is currently under consideration by the council - a ban on the sale of tobacco products to persons under the age of 21 in the borough. Introduced on Jan. 15, it is an ordinance similar to those already adopted in the neighboring towns of Teaneck and Englewood. Hackensack has also discussed such a ban.

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<http://www.northjersey.com/news/borough-considers-smoking-ban-idea-1.1274546>