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## **Bogota Council votes 5-1 to adopt ordinance prohibiting smoking**

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BOGOTA BULLETIN

BOGOTA - The Bogota Council held a public hearing and voted 5-1 on April 16, Councilwoman Lisa Kohles opposed, to adopt an ordinance prohibiting smoking in public parks and recreation areas.

During the public hearing, Albert Ferrara, a community tobacco program coordinator for the Bergen County Department of Health Services, spoke on the matter and praised the council for adopting the ordinance. Ferrara noted studies have shown smoke-free areas deter youths from smoking.

"[No smoking] signs have been a very effective deterrent [in other towns]," he said. "People are respectful of it and are made aware the area is 100 percent smoke free. This is about education and changing the culture."

Bogota resident Susan Caraccio stated she often rents out the Bogota Recreation Center to hold parties and some of her guests smoke, and asked if those grounds are considered part of the ordinance; Kohles replied 'yes.'

Councilwoman Danielle Fede reminded the council there is already an ordinance in place which prohibits smoking in front of public buildings, and said the ordinance regarding the parks is enforceable by "where we put the signs."

"Just be smart and don't smoke in front of the signs," Councilman John Mitchell said, and added the borough is not going to have an "officer on smoking detail."

Kohles asked what the fines are going to be if someone is caught smoking in prohibited areas, and Borough Attorney Craig Bossong said there are already fines in place by statute: up to \$250 for first offense, up to \$500 for second offense, and up to \$1,000 for third and subsequent offenses.

One resident said the fines seemed high and a warning should be provided upon first offense. Borough Administrator Joseph Scarpa said the "police officer always has that discretion."

"It appears the fines are already part of an ordinance that is active," said Council President Jorge Nunez. "I think there are some things that need clarification; I do not think these things that need clarification should stop us from moving forward with adopting the ordinance."

"I say pass the ordinance and we use common sense as a community," added Mitchell.

Councilman Thomas Napolitano said he supported the "stiff fines" and deterring kids from smoking while they are young.

Kohles mentioned the ordinance could hurt public buildings such as the VFW post as it will deter people from renting if they cannot smoke, and added, "It's nice to say Bogota is 100 percent smoke-free, but people are still going to smoke. It's more of a problem with kids than adults. Pagano Park is where the issues are, and that's all kids there."

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