

## **Belleville Times at NorthJersey.com**

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## **Belleville council upholds state ban on smoking, now also in public parks**

The Belleville Township Council last week approved an ordinance that complied with the state ban on smoking in public areas, to now include municipal parks and recreation facilities. The ordinance was passed unanimously as part of a public hearing at the council's June 9 meeting.

Karen Blumenfeld, executive director of the Global Advisors Smokefree Policy, appeared at last week's council meeting to pass out signs and stickers to the council for township disbursement, as well as to offer her gratitude.

"Thanks for making the parks smoke free," she said during the public participation portion of the meeting.

According to a GASP press release, the township was given two dozen metal signs to display in its parks.

Nine years ago, the Smoke-Free Air Act was signed into law by acting Gov. Richard Codey. It banned smoking in all New Jersey public places, including bars, restaurants, and private clubs, except for Atlantic City casinos.

The ordinance passed by the council last week stated that the township could better conserve resources and improve aesthetics by keeping public areas clean of cigarette/cigar butts, ashes, packaging, and other refuse generated by smoking.

According to the ordinance, parks and recreational facilities include public parks, playgrounds, and ball fields publicly owned or leased by the township, along with all property owned or leased by the township where the public was invited to or otherwise engaged in recreational activities, including areas adjacent to such facilities like driveways and aisles.

Smoking is also banned within a 35-foot radius of any entrance or exit of all municipal buildings in Belleville, under the ordinance.

According to GASP, Belleville joins 12 other Essex County communities such as East Orange, Livingston, Maplewood, Newark, Nutley, South Orange and West Orange in requiring 100 percent smoke-free municipal parks and recreational areas.

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