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Tenaflly hears pitch to raise age to purchase tobacco products

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TENAFLY - Tenaflly is considering joining neighboring towns in raising the age limit to buy tobacco products after Hackensack resident James Erwin brought forth the request at the June 16 Mayor and Council meeting.

The governing body plans to discuss the age limit at the next work session on June 30.

Mayor Peter Rustin said the governing body had not extensively considered an ordinance regarding a new age restriction on tobacco, but added, "We all read the newspaper and I am aware of surrounding towns that are now doing this."

"I would be very surprised if we did not adopt [the ordinance] because it makes perfectly good sense and we just spent an hour outside talking about health and wellness and certainly this goes a long way toward that," Rustin said.

One concern about raising the age limit is how that will impact businesses that sell tobacco products.

Erwin said that CVS Pharmacy chain opting not to sell cigarettes starting last September has had no adverse effects on the company since the initiation of the ban.

"I know one of the things that the town has to do is ensure business is successful," Erwin said. "I would declare that there is no business that would go out of business because they are not able to sell cigarettes to 19 and 20 year olds.

Erwin has traveled to multiple towns in the county, asking the governing bodies to raise the age limit for purchasing tobacco and tobacco-related products.

Several towns, including Garfield, Maywood, Teaneck and Englewood, where Erwin was born, have passed ordinances raising the age limit.

Erwin said he is visiting towns to request those officials raise the age limit from 19 to 21 because "the issue of cancer is very dear to me."

"Smoking and smoking-related illnesses are the No. 1 preventable cause of death in the world," he said.

Erwin told the governing body his father died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 33 when Erwin was born. He added his father had four brothers who also died of cancer: Two who died of lung cancer and two of prostate cancer.

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