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Westwood expected to ban tobacco sales to those under 21

WESTWOOD — The borough is soon expected to join a growing number of municipalities in New Jersey that are increasing the legal age to purchase tobacco and e-cigarette products from 19 to 21.

The Westwood Board of Health is drafting a "revamped" tobacco ordinance that could take effect by late August, if adopted.

Councilman Christopher Montana, the council's liaison to the Board of Health, said the goal of the new ordinance is to follow the lead of other New Jersey communities that are attempting to curb tobacco and nicotine use in younger residents.

"We are trying to keep the product out of the hands of younger individuals before they even pick up the habit," Montana said. "We are not only expanding the definition of tobacco to include its traditional form, but also the newer forms — which includes e-cigarettes."

Westwood would join several municipalities that have enacted, or are in the process of enacting, similar ordinances.

Rutherford introduced an ordinance that bars the sale of tobacco and other "nicotine-delivery systems" to those under 21. It could be passed next Monday. Englewood, East Rutherford, Teaneck, Bogota, Garfield, Highland Park, Sayreville and Princeton have also passed similar measures.

"We think that we are on target with this when other communities like us have decided to take a similar route," Montana said. "We think it is the right thing to do in order to protect younger people in our community."

In order to allow the new ordinance to be enacted, the Westwood Borough Council needed to repeal its current tobacco ordinance — which it did by a unanimous vote last month.

Meanwhile, the Westwood Board of Health is expected to introduce its revised tobacco ordinance for a first reading this month. Should it pass, the ordinance would be slated for adoption at its meeting in August, according to Sharon Blehl, the board of health director for Westwood.

"We feel that adults will make a better choice in this health matter than younger people," Blehl said. "We certainly don't want to see younger kids using e-cigarettes or smoking."

The Borough Council could then pass a new tobacco ordinance that mirrors the Health Department's, Montana said.

<http://www.northjersey.com/towns/another-tobacco-age-hike-proposed-1.1369185>