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Trenton City Council reconsiders smoking ban in parks

By Christina Rojas

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TRENTON — Trenton is once again considering an ordinance that would ban people from lighting up in parks.

City Council is expected to introduce an ordinance Tuesday that would prohibit the smoking of cigars, cigarettes, pipes and electronic cigarettes in city parks, recreational areas, city facilities and inside city vehicles.

A similar measure was up for consideration in 2013 and most recently, February, but was pulled from consideration because city officials needed to discuss ways to effectively enforce the law.

Under the ordinance, the areas would be marked with a sign reading "smoke free zone" and the city's health department would be tasked with enforcement.

Violators would be subject to fines of between \$50 and \$100 for the first offense, \$100 and \$200 for the second offense and \$200 and \$500 for each subsequent offense.

A smoking questionnaire taken by 68 residents at National Night Out last August found that 73 percent favored smoke-free city parks.

"It's an initiative that I think, with time, has come," said Barbara Sprechman, prevention coalition coordinator at Mercer Council on Alcoholism and Drug Addiction, which conducted the survey. "We're going to be seeing more and more smoke-free places."

Sprechman said there would have to be self-enforcement.

"If people see signs, one would hope that they would respond to that by not smoking," she said. "I don't see it as something police are going to enforce or health officers have time to enforce. We want to create these environments and change social norms and community norms by just displaying these signs and hopefully it will take effect."

A smoking ban would help reduce exposure to secondhand smoke for park-goers and help eliminate cigarette butt litter, she said.

"Youth need to see healthy behaviors and healthy models and there's a lot of youth at these parks," she said.

http://www.nj.com/mercer/index.ssf/2015/06/trenton_city_council_reconsiders_smoking_ban_in_parks.html

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