

Hillsdale looks to add its own over-21 tobacco law

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HILLSDALE — The Borough Council is expected to take up an ordinance next month to raise the legal age to buy tobacco products to 21.

The move, which would follow the example of several nearby municipalities, is an outgrowth of discussions the council has had since July, when it voted unanimously to introduce an ordinance to raise the minimum age to buy tobacco products to 19 from 18.

The idea, borough officials said, was to bring the borough's ordinance in line with the 2006 state law that set 19 as the minimum age for tobacco purchases.

Then, last month, the council tabled the ordinance so it could be rewritten to include electronic smoking devices. The council unanimously approved the revised ordinance last week, allowing the Hillsdale Police Department to cite the borough law to alleged violators.

However after several members of the public joined Karen Blumenfeld, the executive director of the anti-smoking organization GASP, in urging the council at a recent meeting to raise the age to 21, some members pushed for another ordinance.

"We have an opportunity to do something that's bold," Councilman Larry Meyerson said.

Borough Attorney Mark Madio is expected to write the ordinance and prepare it for introduction at the council's Oct. 6 meeting.

If the ordinance is approved, Hillsdale would join a growing number of municipalities that are choosing to raise the legal age to purchase tobacco to 21.

Englewood, East Rutherford, Teaneck, Bogota and Westwood are among the towns that have raised the purchasing age for tobacco to 21.

In August, Westwood's Board of Health adopted two ordinances – one that banned the sale of tobacco and other products to anyone under 21 and another that requires sellers of e-cigarette to obtain a license with the municipality.

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