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Governing body approves smoking ban

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STAFF WRITER

The governing body approved a smoking ban at municipal recreation facilities last week despite a plea from an advocate for electronic cigarettes.

Smokers of cigars, cigarettes, pipes, electronic cigarettes and other similar devices will no longer be able to light up on municipal sites such as the ball fields, bleachers or any place labeled with "smoke-free zone" signs without the possibility of a \$50 fine.

Earlier this month, Councilwoman Elaine Vuoncino dissented from the council by questioning whether the ordinance was "too restrictive" on residents' rights, but voted with the rest of the council on Oct. 19 to approve the legislation. Councilman Ray Melone was absent from the meeting.

The ordinance passed despite the pleas from a proponent of electronic cigarettes to remove the device from the definition of smoking. Electronic cigarettes or "e-cigarettes" are typically marketed as "smoke-free" methods for reducing individual's reliance on tobacco products.

In a letter to the council, Gregory Conley, a legal policy expert for Consumer Advocates for Smoke-Free Alternatives Association (CASAA), said cigarettes and cigars emit smoke produced by the burning of tobacco while "smoke-free electronic cigarettes" apply heat to a liquid solution of propylene glycol, glycerin, food coloring, and nicotine to create an inhalable vapor.

"While I applaud the council for crafting an ordinance that is narrowly tailored in terms of areas where smoking is banned, I strongly implore you to propose and support an amendment that would remove smoke-free electronic cigarettes from the ordinance's definition of smoking," Conley said in his letter, later adding, "As an ex-smoker who understands how incredibly difficult it can be to quit smoking, I do not like to demonize smokers. However, I have no issue with saying that I do not want to be forced into the smoking section,

especially when I am already in an outside environment. I no longer enjoy the smell of cigarette smoke, and my friends and family do not like it either. Unfortunately, by including electronic cigarettes in this proposed ordinance, that will be the end result."

When reached for comment on Oct. 21, Conley said he was disappointed the council "chose to disingenuously include smoke-free electronic cigarettes in this smoking ban."

"In my conversations with the several members of the [borough] council, I was given two justification for their inclusion — a concern for children modeling the behavior and their concern that the use of electronic cigarette would complicate enforcement of the smoking ban," Conley said.

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