

"The Butt Stops Here": Councilwoman Walsh Sponsors Smoking Ban

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Farmingville, NY - Residents of Brookhaven will soon be breathing in cleaner air. As part of an ambitious new public health initiative, Councilwoman Kathleen Walsh sponsored a town-wide smoking ban that will soon take effect in some of Brookhaven's most popular outdoor spaces.

At a public hearing during the December 7th Town Board meeting, Councilwoman Walsh and her colleagues on the town board voted unanimously to prohibit smoking in 184 Town-owned parks and recreation areas. The ban will include all pools, golf courses, cemeteries and green space with beaches and marinas to be exempt. This new law, which will go into effect on January 1, 2011, is aimed to protect the public health from the dangers of second hand smoke.

"The science is clear: prolonged exposure to second hand smoke - whether you're indoors or out - hurts your health," Councilwoman Walsh said in remarks made after Tuesday's board meeting. "Today, we're doing something about it."

"Given the huge investment the Town has made in recent years to its parks, playgrounds and ball fields," she added, "this ban should also minimize any of the potential littering concerns from discarded cigarettes and/or packaging."

"A smoke-free environment will protect the residents who enjoy our parks," said Supervisor Lesko. "Many young children use our parks and they are extremely vulnerable to second-hand smoke. This new law will help reduce the risk of them developing a number of diseases that are associated with tobacco smoke." He continued, "I commend Councilwoman Walsh for spearheading this legislation and thank the Board for their support of it."

"The Town of Brookhaven has made a significant investment into the parks and recreation facilities within our Town," commented Brookhaven Town Councilman Dan Panico. "Accordingly, this new law will serve to provide cleaner air for the people who play on and visit these facilities, as well as cleaner grounds that will hopefully have fewer cigarette butts and litter because of this law."

Councilwoman Connie Kepert expressed her support, "This law makes sense, especially since it's our youth that get the most use out of our parks. Providing safe spaces for our children to play is a high priority, and this ban will help to accomplish that."

"This smoking ban will have a great impact on the health of all the residents who use our parks and recreation areas," said Councilwoman Jane Bonner. "It will also eliminate the litter that smoking produces with butts and discarded packs that people tend to toss wherever they want. Our parks will be much cleaner and we will all breath easier after January 1st."

"Second hand smoke has been proven more damaging to our children then ever imagined," said Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld. "It is our responsibility to protect them and keep them away from such toxic substances. This measure will certainly accomplish that and also help get the message out about the dangers of second hand smoke."

"The Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island would like to thank the Brookhaven Town Board for joining over 200 municipalities in New York State that have established tobacco free outdoor policies," noted PJ Tedeschi, Suffolk Project Coordinator for the Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island. "These policies create healthier, cleaner environments and provide a positive role model for children."

"The American Cancer Society applauds Councilwoman Walsh and the Brookhaven Town Council for unanimously passing this ban", said Leah-Michelle Jefferson, Director of Advocacy for the American Cancer Society. "There is no safe level of second hand smoke, period. Smoke-free parks will limit exposure to the over 50 cancer causing chemicals in second hand smoke, and help to keep our children from picking up this deadly habit. The American Cancer Society is proud to stand with the Town of Brookhaven as we prepare to take another step forward in protecting the health of our families."

The United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General has concluded that secondhand smoke causes lung cancer among nonsmoking adults, resulting in nearly 3,000 deaths every year. It also causes several respiratory problems among children and tens of thousands of heart disease deaths each year

among U.S. nonsmokers.

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