

North Plainfield rejects raising age for tobacco sales

North Plainfield may urge Legislature to raise tobacco sale age statewide



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June 23, 2015

[NORTH PLAINFIELD](#) – While an ordinance raising the age for tobacco sales from 19 to 21 was rejected on Monday, the Borough Council will consider a resolution next month urging the state Assembly to approve a statewide law raising the age.

By a 4-2 vote with little discussion, the council rejected the ordinance, which would have made North Plainfield the ninth municipality in New Jersey to raise the legal age for purchase of tobacco products.

Councilman Doug Singleterry, who introduced the ordinance, said studies have shown that the proposal was "not a feel-good measure" because case studies have shown that raising the age impacts the age when teens start smoking.

Singleterry cited a June 17 Boston Globe story about Needham, Massachusetts, a Boston suburb, where the smoking rate for high school students plunged after the town of 28,000 raised the age for tobacco sales.

The article said that raising the age reduced the smoking rate among students from 13% to 5.5%.

Singleterry, resigned that the ordinance would be defeated, said he would introduce an ordinance at the next council meeting to urge the state Assembly to pass the bill adopted by the Senate last year that would raise the age throughout the state, taking the action out of the hands of municipalities.

Council President Larry La Ronde, who opposed the ordinance, said it would be "OK" if a statewide law was passed.

Though the state Senate passed a bill on June 30, 2014, raising the age of tobacco sales , the Assembly version of is still in the Assembly Health and Senior Services Committee.

Central Jersey co-sponsors of the Assembly bill include Patrick Diegnan, D-District 18, Nancy Munoz, R-District 21, and Jack Ciattarelli, R-District 16.

The defeat of the ordinance was good news to Sal Risalvato, executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience, Automotive Association, who previously told the council that his organization was "extremely opposed" to the ordinance.

"I am very pleased that the council rejected the ordinance," Risalvato said.

He said that while borough officials recognized that smoking "is not a good thing," they also realized that the ordinance would just cause young people to go to neighboring towns, such as Plainfield, to buy tobacco.

Risalvato said passage of a resolution urging the state Assembly to take action was "fair enough."

Karen Blumenfeld, executive director of New Jersey Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy (NJGASP), said she while she was disappointed over the defeat of the ordinance, she was "very appreciative" that the borough would consider the resolution urging the Assembly to take action. Blumenfeld also referred to the Needham study and said that officials "may not realize that raising the age can make a big difference."

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