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Trenton smoking ban pulled from consideration amid concerns about enforcement

By Jenna Pizzi | Times of Trenton

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TRENTON — Saying city officials need to discuss ways to effectively enforce the law, a proposal to ban smoking in city parks was pulled from consideration Tuesday.

City Council was set to vote preliminarily on an ordinance to ban smoking in city parks and facilities at its meeting on Thursday.

"We just want to improve the quality of life in people's neighborhoods," said Councilwoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, a proponent of the measure.

City attorney David Minchello said he is working to find ways to improve enforcement on this ordinance and others like it. The measure was up for consideration in 2013, but was unsuccessful amid similar concerns. Residents said it would fall into the same category as other ordinances like cleaning up after pet waste in parks, leash laws or bans on drinking alcoholic beverages, which, they complained, are not enforced.

The ordinance up for consideration this time would prohibit the smoking of cigars, cigarettes, pipes and electronic cigarettes in city parks, recreational areas, city facilities and inside city vehicles.

The areas would be marked with a sign reading "smoke free zone." Violators would be subject to a fine between \$50 and \$100 for the first offense and between \$100 and \$200 for the second offense. Each subsequent offense would include a fine of between \$200 and \$500.

The ordinance claims prohibiting smoking in these areas would protect "impressionable children from the temptations of experimenting with cigarettes and other tobacco products" and would keep the city's public works department from having to clean up litter such as cigarette butts, ashes and packaging.

Reynolds-Jackson said she sees it as a "self-policing type of thing," where a sign might deter individuals from lighting up. She said she hopes to see the ordinance win approval from the council this year.

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