

West

FINDLAY

Township makes park playing fields tobacco-free

By Andrea Iglar

A new rule prohibits tobacco use on all playing fields and courts in Findlay parks, including ball fields, playgrounds, basketball and tennis courts, skating ramps and other facilities.

The policy forbids smoking or chewing tobacco on all recreational surfaces owned or operated by the township, including associated dugouts, benches and some concession stands.

Tobacco will continue to be permitted in pavilions, spectator stands and general areas of the park, such as walking trails.

Supervisors approved a resolution June 11 that establishes all playing surfaces as tobacco-free zones to protect public health and avoid litter that causes additional maintenance expenses, diminished aesthetics and the risk of ingestion by children.

"I don't believe government should be telling anyone to do anything, but in this case I don't think kids should see [tobacco use] around them because we want to discourage kids from taking up any bad habit like that," supervisors Chairman Thomas Gallant said.

Mr. Gallant said he'd gotten complaints from some parents and baseball team managers about adults smoking and chewing tobacco and leaving cigarette butts, empty cans of chew and other tobacco litter in dugouts.

The township and Findlay Athletic Association met and agreed they did not want tobacco products to be used in

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front of children, he said.

"The whole point is to keep it out of sight of our kids so they're not encouraged to use those products," Mr. Gallant said. "If somebody wants to smoke a cigarette or have a chew ... they will have to be way outside the area where the children play."

Signs will be posted designating playing surfaces as tobacco-free zones. The rule includes all types of tobacco use, including chewing tobacco and smoking cigarettes, pipes or cigars.

Mr. Gallant said coaches, parents and others involved with organized sports understood the first enforcement step would be to "calmly and discreetly" remind a tobacco user of the rule.

Violators who refuse to stop using tobacco in the designated areas may be subject to immediate ejection from the field or court, or cash fines.

Andrea Iglar is a freelance writer.