

Woodridge postpones smoking ban vote

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WOODRIDGE, IL -

Woodridge won't act on a proposed smoking ban ordinance until either the state adopts its own ordinance, or enough surrounding communities do the same, village officials say.

During an often contentious Village Board meeting April 5, trustees decided to postpone voting on a smoking ban ordinance until a later date, a decision that riled a few officials and a handful of local business owners in attendance.

"At this time it is in the best interests of the village to defer any action until the state acts," said Mayor William Murphy during the meeting.

Murphy said a recent informal poll of local municipalities showed some were going to wait until the state adopts its own law, particularly Naperville.

"At a village council meeting last night (April 4) Naperville decided to wait to draft its ordinance so it reflects the content of the state's (proposed law)," Murphy said.

"If the state does not move forward with their own ban, then we can always come back and consider a village ordinance," Murphy said.

Trustee Robert Brandt, a strong proponent for a municipal smoking ban, urged the board to vote on the issue rather than wait.

"I don't know why we couldn't vote on the issue and make a declaration that we favor public health, and then put in a caveat that our target date matches the state's if and when they act," said Brandt, who moved the board vote on the issue.

Trustee Richard Wood seconded the motion, but the motion never came to a vote after Trustee John Curran made a motion to postpone the vote. That motion carried 4-2.

The issue likely will be brought up again at the April 19 Village Board meeting.

"I am going to bring it up to a vote each meeting until we pass it," Brandt said.

Over the past month the board had come to a consensus to adopt a restrictive smoking ban with an implementation date of Sunday, July 1.

"But the state began considering its own, and it passed through the Senate, which was not anticipated," said Murphy.

The state bill is still being reviewed in the House. If it passes, Gov. Rod Blagojevich could veto it, an action which could take place as late as the last week of July.

"There is no guarantee the state will adopt it, so we should adopt our own with the caveat that the implementation date will coincide with the state. If the state does not act, then at least we have ours in our pocket," Brandt said.

Recently trustees have said a smoking ban ordinance should coincide with action by the state or surrounding communities to protect local Woodridge businesses.

Several business owners and the Woodridge area Chamber of Commerce have expressed concerns that if Woodridge enacts an ordinance alone, customers would patronize restaurants and establishments outside of Woodridge.

"We just want a level playing field, and not to put our businesses at a disadvantage," said Rich Moore, owner of Shanahan's Food & Spirits.

Moore said at a recent board workshop he would go along with a ban as long as it is statewide, or does not impact his business.

Ted Bulthaup, owner of Hollywood Boulevard Theater, opposes and legislation banning smoking in businesses.

"There is nothing reasonable about it. I own my own business, and are they going to tell me I cannot smoke a pipe at my place of business once in awhile if I want to?" said Bulthaup.

"Every other theater is nonsmoking, and mine is nonsmoking in 90 percent of it," said Bulthaup.

"My customers come to Hollywood Theater because they have a choice, and those that don't want to come here still have a choice. This is not something government should be legislating. ... What will they get involved in next?" Bulthaup said.