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Council's smoking ban mirrors state legislation

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You might want to make it your 2008 new year's resolution to quit smoking.

The City Council passed a smoking ban ordinance late Wednesday evening that exactly mirrors the current state smoking ban legislation that has passed the Illinois Senate and is maneuvering its way through the House.

The vote was 6-2, with Councilmen John Rosanova and Jim Boyajian against. The ban goes into effect Jan. 1.

Senate Bill 500 - the state legislation - prohibits smoking in all public places and places of employment. People will be required to smoke 15 feet away from doors, windows and vents. Exemptions are limited to current and future retail tobacco stores, homes unless used for the purpose of a home-based business, certain rooms in nursing homes and long-term care homes and 25 percent of hotel and motel rooms.

Restaurants and taverns are not currently included in the Senate bill and no mention of exempting them in Naperville was brought up during Wednesday's meeting.

"It's the right thing to do," Smoke Free Naperville President Tony Andrews said after the vote. "(The council) regrouped. It's great. (SB 500) is a reasonable alternative. It's a tighter bill."

The Senate bill does not include a hardship exemption for businesses as the city bill could have done. The council could choose to tweak or add new provisions.

If the state Legislature does pass the bill and Gov. Rod Blagoveich signs it into law, the city would not be able to implement a less stringent measure. The state ban, as written in the legislation, would go into effect Jan. 1.

"We're voting on a little bit of ink on paper," Councilman Grant Wehrli said before the vote. "Let's send a message of support to Springfield. Let's vote it up or down and move on. It's that simple."

Council members had once more discussed pushing a decision off until a state vote took place.

"We made the right move waiting," Councilman John Rosanova said. "I think that's what we should continue to do. ... I've got news for you. (If this passes at the state level) everybody will be no smoking, period. What we can do after this is tweak it and make it a little different in Naperville."

The council also approved a rebate for Naperville's manufacturing electric customers Wednesday, hoping to soften the blow of the recent electric rate increases for some of the larger users.

The idea of a rebate has been in play since November. Council members asked city staff to develop a rebate program for manufacturing businesses, namely Phoenix Closures and Kraft. Both businesses are primary metering customers of the city, or those who use more than 20 million kilowatt-hours of electricity a year.

In 2006 the city had to revise its electric rates after negotiating a new, four-year power purchase contract.

According to a memo prepared by city Finance Director Doug Krieger, the rebate program would be limited to Phoenix Closures and Kraft, although any new manufacturers who meet the same usage criteria could ask to be included in the rebate offering.

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