

Who will tell you to stop smoking?

Organizers have questions about enforcing possible ban

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The only smoking at Ribfest next year could be on the grills.

A proposed citywide public smoking ban in Naperville also would prohibit smoking at outdoor public events such as Ribfest, Last Fling and Naper Days, as well as productions at the Community Concert Center in Central Park.

And the proposal appears to have little opposition.

But most event organizers are concerned about who's going to watch for smokers.

"We're aware it's something the city's discussing," Last Fling Executive Director Marie DeGroh said. "We just don't know who will be enforcing it."

On Tuesday, the city council ordered a smoking ban law be drafted so the public can provide input on the issue before the council votes on it in February. The preliminary draft is expected to be released in early January.

The proposal itself is not the issue with organizers.

Chuck Corrigan is the president of Naperville FEST, a consortium of organizers of popular citywide events. The group is aware of the proposal but hasn't been approached by the city about the proposal's impact on the festivals and celebrations.

"It's not out of the blue. It's been widely publicized over the last couple months," he said. "The service clubs that organize these events don't seem to be opposed. The impression I get is no one is going to fight for an exemption."

Mike McManus, publicity liaison for the Naperville Exchange Club-sponsored Ribfest, said smoking has not been an issue at Ribfest.

"I think the public would mention stuff like that if they had a problem," he said. "We haven't had many complaints about it."

Police Chief David Dial said he doesn't anticipate the need for an increased police presence at the events to crack down on smoking scofflaws.

"I don't think it's going to be a big issue for the police to handle," he said. "I think for the most part it will be self-enforcing."

Corrigan said some festivals and events will be easier to enforce than others. The city's two biggest public events, Ribfest and Last Fling, provide interesting case studies for enforcement.

The logistics of enforcing such a ban would be far easier at Ribfest because it's completely enclosed. But Last Fling is spread out over several downtown blocks and different venues.

"We have not been consulted with this at all at this point, so we're hoping we would be before they impose this on us," DeGroh said.

The council did not discuss the possibility of a smoking section at the outdoor events, but Corrigan said that might be suggested for the final draft of the law.

"My personal opinion is that you could have an area that's set aside as a smoking area or an area that's just outside the festival grounds where there would be no restrictions," he said.

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