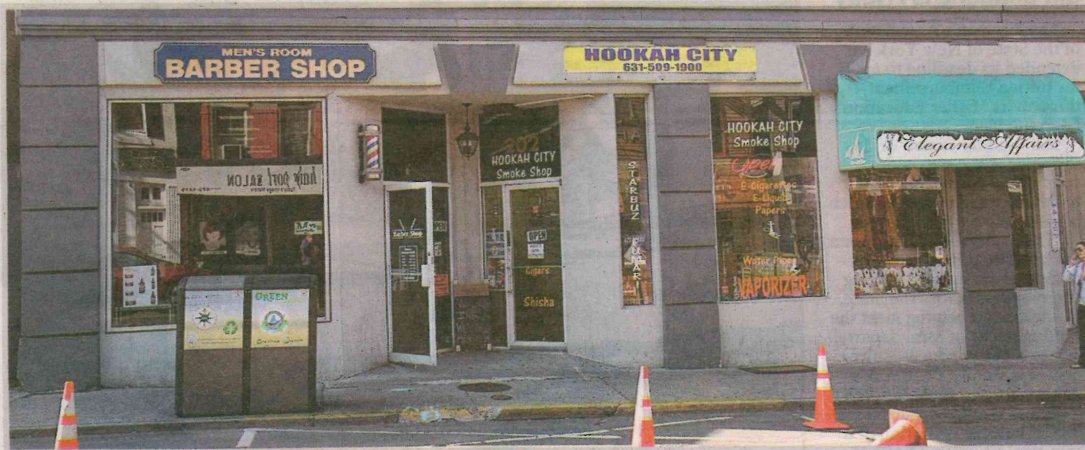


PORT JEFFERSON

HOOKAH BARS GETTING ZONED OUT



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Port Jefferson has joined a growing list of Long Island municipalities trying to prevent more hookah bars from coming into town.

The village board voted 3-2 on Oct. 5 to ban new hookah lounges — and strip clubs and tattoo parlors — from commercial districts and confine them to light industrial sections of the harbor-side village. Trustees Bruce D'Abramo and Bruce Miller cast the dissenting votes.

Village officials said hookah bars and retail stores that sell hookah products attract illegal activity such as underage drinking. They also expressed concern about health risks linked to smoking from the water pipes.

"Those are businesses that we don't believe are conducive to the types of business that we have here in the village," Mayor Margot J. Garant said in an interview before the vote. "They are already drawing a lot of complaints from parents whose kids come downtown."

The City of Glen Cove and the villages of Great Neck, Great Neck Plaza and Great Neck Estates are among the Long Island communities that restrict hookah bars.

Village board to restrict places where lounges, other businesses, can open

Hooked on hookah

Hookahs involve the use of a water pipe with a bowl, hose and smoke chamber to inhale smoke from heated tobacco.

Origins: Hookahs were first used in Persia about five centuries ago. Their use in the United States has grown steadily since the 1960s.

Health: Some experts believe hookah smoking is linked to heart disease and lung and oral cancers and is no less dangerous than cigarette smoking.

The Port Jefferson law restricts new hookah bars, strip clubs and tattoo parlors to areas zoned for light industrial uses. Officials said the village has only two light industrial properties, and both are occupied by other types of businesses.

Sanjay Bakshi, owner of Hookah City on Main Street, said he did not object to the new law,

Popularity: A 2010 survey found 17 percent of male high school seniors and 15 percent of female high school seniors had used hookahs in the previous year.

Popular culture: Characters smoke hookahs in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "Return of the Jedi."

SOURCES: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mayo Clinic, Wikipedia

but he added his 2-year-old business should not be seen as a stain on the village. His business and three other hookah stores are allowed to remain open.

"Hookah, I don't think is a bad word. You can say it's entertainment. It's a fun thing," Bakshi said in a telephone interview. "Hookah is not bad for you, I don't think."

Hookah City, on Main Street, does not want to be seen as a stain on the village.

Residents who spoke at a public hearing before the board voted said they do not want hookah bars in the village.

"From an image standpoint, if I'm visiting the village from another community, that's not the image I want to see," Fred Rosenfeld said. "I think it lowers the standards of the village."

But he and others said the new law should go further and ban hookah lounges altogether.

"There's a possibility these stores will never close," Rosenfeld said. "This thing could go on forever."

Garant said the village had scrapped an earlier plan to eradicate hookah stores because such a law probably would be unconstitutional.

"We can't prohibit, but we can regulate," Garant said.

D'Abramo said he voted against the measure because he did not think it would work, but he hoped that market forces would close the shops.

"I don't see that this is going to have any impact on the people selling hookah products in the village," he said. "I think it will serve only to make our code book thicker."

ED BETZ

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