

Smoke shop zones debated at city hearing

By **ROKSANA AMID**

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Smoke shops appear to be everywhere these days, and most appear to be doing a brisk business.

Nadeem Bashir, of Queens, opened RNJ Smoke & Cigars on Glen Cove Ave last month. Bashir said he used most of his savings to get the shop up and running, and he hopes it will help support his family, which includes five children.

But his timing may not have been the best. On June 27, a week after Bashir opened, the City Council held a public hearing to discuss rezoning hemp and paraphernalia shops. The hearing will remain open until the next council meeting on July 25.

The purpose of the hearing was to discuss a proposed local law that would restrict or prohibit commercial uses believed by the council to be detrimental

to the health, safety and welfare of Glen Cove residents, and particularly children. After the city Police Department fielded complaints last year from concerned residents that shops were selling illicit products such as marijuana

to minors, an investigation last June resulted in a total of 10 arrests at Shore Vapes, on Glen Cove Avenue, Up in Smoke Head Shop and Smoke Smart 191, both on Forest Avenue, Unique Tobacco, on School Street, and N3 Smoke and Cigar Shop, on Glen Street.

Juan Noguera, a customer service representative for RNJ Smoke & Cigars, said he had heard about the legal troubles the other shops are facing, and added that

he believes that any kind of illicit sales to minors — whether it be cannabis or drug paraphernalia — isn't worth the trouble.

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Shops shouldn't sell anything illegal, and how does it hurt me asking someone for their ID?

JUAN NOGUERA
customer service representative,
RNJ Smoke & Cigars

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Glen Cove considers rezoning smoke shops

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CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

ID?” Noguera asked. “It doesn’t. I don’t know why some people don’t do it, because the \$20 from a minor isn’t worth it. We just make it easier for adults to enjoy their lives.”

At last week’s hearing, City Attorney Tip Henderson said that the City Council believes that exposing children to a drug-conducive atmosphere and culture promoted by smoke shops has an adverse effect on their growth and development, and the businesses should therefore be subject to tight restrictions.

The proposed law, Henderson explained, addresses the sale of cannabinoid hemp and drug paraphernalia. He explained that the measure would not prohibit their sale, but rather would restrict it to certain parts of the city that are no closer than 1,000 feet to a school, church, park or playground, and prevent shops from being within 500 feet of one another.

“We worked on this for several months with the SAFE agency,” Mayor Pamela Panzenbeck said, referring to Substance Abuse Free Environment, an organization dedicated to eliminating alcohol and substance abuse in Glen Cove. “This has been a response to multiple discussions with parents who have reached out to me requesting something like this.”

It’s not quite clear which areas of B-2 zones — which are designated commercial districts — will be affected. Henderson explained that there are several B-2 zones in the city, and the new law could complicate their borders. A part of Carpenter Street, for example, is within one of the zones, but could be too close to the Landing Elementary School if the law were to pass.

Maps detailing the exact areas in which shops could operate under the proposed law will be made available at the next public hearing.



Roksana Amid/Herald

A WEEK AFTER Nadeem Bashir opened RNJ Smoke & Cigars, the City Council held a public hearing on June 27 to discuss rezoning hemp and paraphernalia shops. The hearing will remain open until the next council meeting on July 25.

Panzenbeck said that the smoke shops that are already open in the city “are enough,” and that she had received a multitude of emails from parents with concerns that more will open.

As a teacher and parent, she said, she felt the need to act quickly.

The public input at the meeting appeared to mostly

favor the restrictions.

“My stance remains the same,” SAFE member Bruce Kennedy, a Glen Cove resident, said. “The National Institutes of Health has concluded that these types of businesses in a community result in disproportionate adverse health impacts to young people due to greater access and exposure to these types of products and their advertising.”