

Council's new restrictions on smoke shops have public support

By **ROKSANA AMID**

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The Glen Cove City Council unanimously passed a new law on July 25 that restricts the establishment of tobacco stores, commonly known as vape shops, in certain areas in the city, which, council members said, will help reduce young people's access to tobacco, vaping and drug paraphernalia.

Vaping products include electronic cigarettes and pipes, vape pens and similar devices, and vape liquid.

Since the first public hearing on the law on June 27, the city had modified the range in which vape products may be sold. It initially prohibited stores within 1,000 feet of houses of worship, schools, day care centers, playgrounds and parks. But Tip Henderson, the city's attorney, concluded that the restriction "obliterated any areas that could allow for a facility like this to be established." He helped to redraft a new law, which the council approved last week, which kept the restricted 1,000-foot distance for schools, but otherwise reduced it to 500 feet.

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'Overwhelming support' for new local law

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Mayor Pamela Panzenbeck said that the smoke shops already operating in the city "are enough," and that she had received a multitude of emails from parents expressing concerns that more would open. As a teacher and parent, she said, she felt the need to act quickly.

"We got it right," Panzenbeck said. "We took the time to get it right. The response I've gotten from the community — they really want this, so it's wonderful."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most electronic cigarettes contain nicotine,

which is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development into a user's early to mid-20s. Additionally, young people who use e-cigarettes may be more likely to eventually smoke cigarettes.

The CDC estimates that e-cigarettes have been the most commonly used

tobacco product among young people since 2014. In 2022, roughly one of every 30 middle school students, and one of every seven high school students, reported that they had used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days.

With those health risks in mind, Safe Inc., the only certified substance-abuse prevention agency in Glen Cove, embarked on a year-long effort to draft and propose the law restricting new stores to B-2 district areas. Safe Inc. said it believed the city needed strong and effective laws and regulations to protect young people from becoming addicted to vaping products by reducing access to tobacco and other drug paraphernalia.

The Glen Cove Police Department and Panzenbeck's office, which also received complaints from residents and surrounding communities that stores were selling flavored nicotine vapes to minors, worked with Safe Inc. to establish the law.

Vape lounges, which are prohibited throughout the city, now include establishments known as hookah lounges.

Andrew Ardino, a Glen Cove resident, said he wasn't sure how effective the new law would be. "It will reduce it, by nature of it not being available everywhere," Ardino said, referring to the use of vaping paraphernalia. "But isn't the real problem that they are able to purchase this stuff to begin with? They're supposed to be 21 to purchase."

After the Police Department fielded

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RNJ Smoke & Cigars, on Glen Cove Avenue, which sells tobacco products, is grandfathered into the city's new law.

Roksana Amid/Herald

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.

City Councilman Jack Mancusi, a retired sergeant in the city Police Department, said he still keeps in touch with many of his former colleagues and those interested in the health and safety of the community.

"There was overwhelming support for this change," Mancusi said. "I'm very happy that this is in. I'm very happy to vote yes on this."