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No-smoking zones to be expanded

By Karen Zautyk
Observer Correspondent

KEARNY -

In February 2008, the Town of Kearny, described by one elected official as being “on the cutting edge” of the issue, prohibited smoking -- or the carrying of any lighted cigarette, cigar, pipe “or other similar device” -- within the boundaries of 11 municipally owned playgrounds.

That ordinance read:

“WHEREAS the smoking of tobacco is detrimental to the public health and welfare, it has been determined that the curbing of smoking where the public will gather will assist in the decrease of smoking and its impact on the public, which is beneficial to public health and welfare, it is ... the purpose of this ordinance to prohibit smoking from playgrounds ... where the presence of children is likely to occur.”

These included: Belgrove Drive Playground, Bell, Columbia/Coogan Manor, Dowd, Miglin, Pettigrew, Tappan and Windsor/Grove Playgrounds, as well as Riverbank Park Playground and the playground at Gunnell Oval.

In May 2008, that ordinance was amended to cover both “children’s and adults’ play activities” and expanded to include Fairlawn Manor Park

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Photo by Ron Leir

Demolition crews work on site clearance in aftermath of destructive Harrison fire.

By Ron Leir
Observer Correspondent

HARRISON -

The five-alarm blaze that ripped through two Latino restaurants, a church, and several residential buildings in Harrison on March 10 has ignited a politi-

cal firestorm about the level of fire protection services in the town.

A count by the Harrison Mayor’s Office had at least 28 residents, including 12 school-age children, from the 600 block of Frank E. Rodgers (FER) Blvd. North displaced by the fire, which

also extended to 8 1/2 Davis St. The Harrison Education Foundation is accepting donations on behalf of the families.

No civilians were hurt but five members of the Jersey City Fire Department were injured when an explosion – triggered by what some fire

officials called a “backdraft” – occurred as the firefighters were leaving one of the buildings at the fire scene at 602 FER Blvd. North.

All five – including two superior officers – are recovering from burns, scrapes and

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Kearny crime hits 10-year low

By Karen Zautyk
Observer Correspondent

KEARNY -

The numbers are in, and the news is more than good. The Town of Kearny’s Uniform Crime Report Index for 2012 shows an 18% decrease

in crimes compared with 2011. That represents a 10-year low.

This, despite a Police Department operating with a significantly reduced force.

Currently, the KPD has 98 members, Police Chief John Dowie noted. Ten years ago,

the force numbered 122.

In a statement issued with the report March 12, Mayor Alberto Santos recognized the manpower problem, noting that “additional resources would be allocated to the department in 2013, including additional surveillance cameras

at the road entry points and additional staffing.”

Using 2010 census figures showing Kearny with a population of 40,684, the current staffing level translates to one officer to protect and serve

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