

# Q What is Section 8?

**A:** In the Sept. 28 issue, Jeff Simms reported on the sale of the Tompkins Terrace housing complex in Beacon. Rents for the apartments in the development are subsidized by the federal government through a voucher program known as Section 8, after the part of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 that authorizes assistance to low-income renters, including senior citizens and disabled people on fixed incomes and homeless families.

The program is administered locally by the Beacon Public Housing Authority ([beaconhousingauthority.org](http://beaconhousingauthority.org)). According to figures compiled by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, the local agency oversees 309 units in Beacon, and a total of 458 people.

The average family pays \$449 per month in rent, and the federal government contributes \$805. About 60 percent of households also receive subsidies for utilities that average \$136 monthly.

The average annual household income for renters who have vouchers is \$8,461 for individuals and \$19,472 for families. In Beacon, the average wait time to receive a voucher is nearly five years.

In Putnam County there are 883 people and 587 units, with families paying an average of \$400 monthly and HUD picking up \$926. Eighty-six percent receive utility allowances that average \$127. The average annual income of renters is \$10,100 for individuals and \$16,640 for households. The average wait time is just under three years.

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# Putnam Raises Tobacco Buy to 21

*First initiative of anti-addiction task force*

By Holly Crocco

**T**he Putnam County Legislature, by a 6-3 vote, on Tuesday (Oct. 2) made it illegal for anyone younger than 21 to buy tobacco products or related “accessories.” The minimum age to purchase cigarettes and other tobacco had been 18, although it is not illegal for teenagers or young adults to smoke.

Legislator Barbara Scuccimarra (R-Philipstown), who is chair of the Legislature’s Health Committee, has been pushing for the Tobacco 21 legislation since it came up as a suggestion by the One Army Against the War on Addiction Task Force.

“This was the first initiative to come out of the task force,” she said. “They believe, and I believe, this is a measure we must take not only to stop tobacco, but to stop vaping, as well,” which is a process in which flavored vapor with nicotine is inhaled through a battery-powered device.

The legislation was volleyed back and forth between the Health Committee and the full Legislature over the past several months as lawmakers debated the intent, and execution, of the law. It will now go to the county executive’s desk for her signature and take effect 60 days after it is filed with the New York secretary of State.

Legislator Amy Sayegh (R-Mahopac Falls) said she supports the county doing anything it can to get tobacco products out of the hands of minors. “We want to be proactive here; we don’t want to wait for the state to act,” she said.

However, Legislator Paul Jonke (R-Southeast), who vot-

ed against the measure, dismissed the law as “feel-good legislation” that penalizes retailers. He said the way to combat teen smoking and vaping is through education.

“I compliment the American Cancer Society, the Health Department, the school districts and the Department of Social Services for educating our teenagers,” he said. “The rate of teen smoking has certainly declined since I was a teenager.”

Legislator Toni Addonizio (R-Kent), who also voted no, said an adult is someone who is regarded as independent, self-sufficient and responsible, and that generally happens at 18, when individuals can marry, vote, enter legal contracts, buy firearms and enlist in the military. By increasing the age to purchase tobacco to 21, it is implied that young adults cannot make their own decisions, she said.

“We are sending a message to an entire generation of young adults that we need the government to tell us how to live,” said Addonizio.

Legislator Joseph Castellano (R-Brewster) said it was a difficult decision for him to support Tobacco 21, but that at the end of the day, “if we can save one person from smoking and one person from vaping,” the law will have served its purpose.

Ginny Nacerino (R-Patterson) was the third legislator to vote no.

Following the passage of the law, Julie Hart, a representative from the American Cancer Society, praised the legislature.

“Tobacco 21 just makes sense, given nearly 96 percent of smokers begin this deadly addiction before turning 21,” she said. “It is a win for health and our pocketbooks. We are thrilled Putnam County has put health before the profits of Big Tobacco and the vaping industry. We look forward to County Executive [MaryEllen] Odell signing this crucial legislation. We also look forward to this law being enacted statewide.”

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