

A Public Meeting of the Oconee County Board of Commissioners was held on Tuesday, March 18, 2008, at 6:30 p.m., in Courtroom No. 1 at the Oconee County Courthouse.

Members Present:

Chairman Melvin Davis
Commissioner Jim Luke
Commissioner Don Norris
Commissioner Margaret S. Hale
Commissioner Chuck Horton

Staff Present:

Administrative Officer Alan Theriault
County Attorney Daniel Haygood
County Clerk Gina M. Lindsey

Wayne Provost, Strategic Planning
BR White, Planning Director
William White, Project Coordinator

Media Present:

Blake Giles, The Oconee Enterprise
Adam Thompson, Athens Banner Herald

Chairman Davis opened the meeting by stating this was a public hearing to allow citizens the opportunity to comment and give input on a proposed Ordinance Regulating the Sale of Wine and Malt Beverages in Oconee County.

County Attorney Daniel Haygood provided an overview of the proposed ordinance. He noted the ordinance is an update to the existing Ordinance Regulating the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages in Oconee County and allows the sale of wine and malt beverages in restaurants.

David Dawson said he was in opposition to any alcohol sales in Oconee County and asked for a non-binding vote by the citizens. Lyndol Cain said Oconee County's citizens have historically voted against alcohol sales and cited the example of Jackson County where alcohol laws continue to become more liberal. Jerry Price expressed concern for increased underage drinking and alcohol-related problems and said liquor by the drink will follow.

Kathy Boatenreiter spoke on the lack of dining options in Oconee County and said she preferred to spend her money close to home. Randy Boatenreiter said he wanted the option to have a glass of wine or beer with his meal and felt that government should not regulate his right to make choices. Scott Norris said allowing the sale of wine and malt beverages in restaurants would benefit Oconee County by diversifying the tax base.

John Duffett said he liked the restrictions in the proposed ordinance and suggested specifying that lounges and bars are not permitted and wine and malt beverages can only be purchased after food has been ordered.

Jerry Studdard stated new residents did not want this ordinance and if allowing the sale of wine and malt beverages in restaurants is approved, liquor by the drink will follow. John Bergstrom expressed concerns about the approval process and said it was a breach of public trust to not allow the citizens to vote on the issue. Mr. Bergstrom said he would like to see a revenue benefit analysis.

William Mayberry said the proposed ordinance was well written and restrictive and in his experience, most adults drink responsibly.

Tom Collins expressed concerns for the 75% food/25% alcohol ratio, restrictions on live entertainment and the requirement to have a minimum 25 year-old in charge of the restaurant at all times. He also asked that later hours be allowed on New Year's Eve.

Chris Parsons said she values the quality of life in Oconee County and was concerned with students and under-age drinking, alcohol related accidents and enforcement of the proposed ordinance.

Chairman Davis expressed appreciation for the public's comments and said it was the Board's desire for everyone to have ample time to review the final ordinance. He reminded those in attendance that the Board was scheduled for a second work session on the proposed ordinance at 6:30 p.m. on March 20, 2008.

There being no further business, by consensus the meeting was adjourned.

County Clerk

Chairman

Date