

A Public Meeting of the Oconee County Board of Commissioners was held on Tuesday, May 22, 2007, 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 was absent.

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

Jeff Benko, Finance Director
Wayne Provost, Strategic Planning
William White, Project Coordinator

Media Present: Vinnie Williams, The Oconee Enterprise
Merritt Melancon, The Oconee Enterprise
Chris Butler, Athens Banner Herald
Ingunn Mercer, The Oconee Leader

Chairman Davis began the meeting with a Moment of Silence. Commissioner Luke led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Davis stated the meeting was to allow citizens the opportunity to comment on the permitting of on-site consumption sales of beer and wine in food service establishments and a potential ordinance to regulate such sales. He explained approximately one hour would be dedicated to public comment and one hour to ordinance content recommendations. Speakers were limited to three minutes each.

Strategic and Long-Range Planning Director Wayne Provost moderated the meeting and opened the floor for comments on the permitting of on-site consumption sales of beer and wine in food service establishments.

Speaking in opposition: Lyndol Cain and Logan Smith said the additional revenue would not bring a reduction in property taxes. Dave Christopher and Melissa Stoker spoke on their concern of a diminished quality of life and community standards. Margaret Carmichael stated the defeat of the liquor referendum was a clear representation of all the citizens. Carlton Shelton said he believed this was a moral issue, not an economic one. Regina Clounts and Tom Leach asked the Board of Commissioners to put the vote to the citizens. Rick Standard, Linda Turman, Violet Rudouske, Johnny Lay and John Cleaveland expressed their concerns for citizen safety and increased crime, drug addiction and drunk driving. Charles Baugh noted Oconee County has no public transportation available to intoxicated patrons.

Speaking in favor: Bill Ross, Bob O'Rear and Sam Jones stated the proposal is an economic issue for Oconee County. Tom Collins, Mack Guest and Tom Plaxico spoke on the need to broaden the tax base and keep taxes in Oconee County. Patrick McMaster suggested because beer and wine are currently sold in food stores, the only change would be that the restaurant profits rather than the food store. Dan Arnold said this was not an ethical, moral or legal issue and noted the county is missing out on revenue that could take the burden off the citizens. Lewis Stropshire and Mark Capobianco noted the economic impact and tax benefits.

Mr. Provost opened the floor for recommendations on the content of a potential ordinance to regulate sales of beer and wine in food service establishments.

Charles Baugh, Trey Thompson, Mike Streetman, Jay Sultan, Jon Williams, Larry Ward, Tom Leach, Becky Vaughn, Jim Shearer and Michael Reese made the following suggestions for inclusion in the potential ordinance: Include a strong enforcement mechanism; require 75% food/25% beer and wine sales; state who is responsible for enforcement; do not allow bars or adult entertainment; require a beer & wine bond and tie fines to the bond; tie food and beverage percentages to gross sales; tie D.U.I.'s back to the licensee; learn from the mistakes of others; use fine revenue for additional law enforcement; state clear age requirements; require education and training for employees; use the City of Watkinsville's ordinance as a model; and, impose stringent fines and stiff penalties for serving under age patrons.

Chairman Davis reminded the audience a second public meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 14, 2007, at 6:30 p.m. in Courtroom No. 1 at the Oconee County Courthouse.

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

County Clerk

Chairman

Date