

LOCAL

Grover alcohol forces need 30 more signatures for referendum

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

GROVER - Alcohol sales proponents are approximately 30 signatures away from a November referendum.

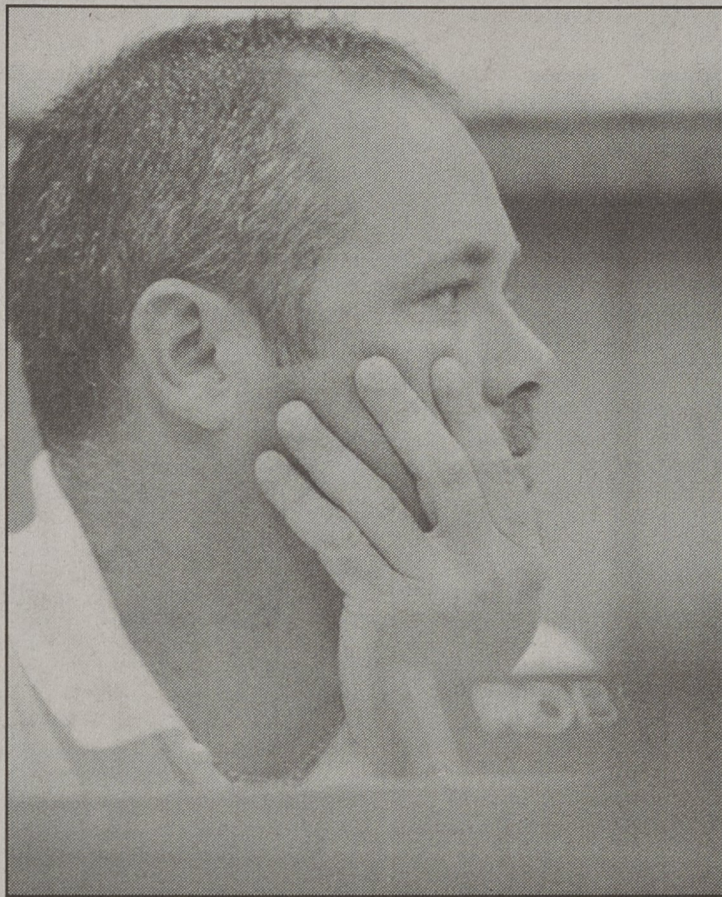
The drive to get 144 signatures, 35 percent of the registered voters, started in April. The group has until early July to give the petition to the Cleveland County Board of Elections.

Jackie Bennett, a Grover commissioner and one of the people collecting signatures, is confident they'll make the deadline. If the petition is turned in on time that will probably mean the issue is on the ballot during the Nov. 8 general election. If a separate election is held that could cost the town close to \$10,000.

Bennett describes reaction to the petition as "mixed." Some residents have refused to sign it, telling Bennett their position is based on being a Christian.

She says the issue is not a moral one but about bringing more businesses and property tax revenue to the town. Developer Mike Heath has expressed interest in building a convenience store if sales are approved. He owns approximately a block of property in the town and already has opened a discount store.

Bennett says others have



JOSEPH BRYMER/HERALD
Grover Mayor Robert Sides presides over the town's Monday night council meeting.

told her that they do not want their names appearing on the petition but would vote during the referendum in favor of sales.

For council member Bill Willis religion will guide his vote in the event of a referendum.

"I personally as a Christian am not going to

vote for it," he said.

The petition asks for both on- and off-premise beer and wine sales. According to Willis, the town already has de facto off-premise sales Monday through Saturday because of its proximity to South Carolina convenience stores. He believes Grover would feel little impact from

approving off-premise sales six days a week.

South Carolina laws prohibit alcohol sales on Sunday. If Grover approves Sunday off-premise sales it would benefit the town, according to Willis though he says he is "personally opposed to it."

On-premise sales would "bring a lot more trouble than the town needs," Willis said.

Bennett argues that between zoning and state alcohol laws, the town could easily regulate on-premise sales.

In April, resident Lynn Falls asked the council to hold a referendum on alcohol sales. Bennett made the motion but it died for lack of a second.

Municipalities can legalize alcohol sales three ways. Council may vote to allow it or they may vote to hold a referendum making it directly residents' choice.

Residents may bypass council by petition of 35 percent of registered voters.

Falls was on the agenda for Grover's Monday council meeting to present the petition however that item was removed per her request.

Andie Brymer can be reached at abrymer@kingsmountainherald.com or 704-739-7496.

FIREWORKS

From 1A

according to Cozart. Initially sales went down but customers came back to South Carolina wanting the still more powerful fireworks after those sold in North Carolina failed to satisfy.

"They come to the door and ask, 'do you have the real stuff,'" Cozart said. In North Carolina sparklers, fountains, smoke

devices, snake and glow worms, trick noisemakers, and toy pistol caps are permitted. Explosive or aerial fireworks, Roman candles, and rockets or similar devices are prohibited.

Cherokee Fireworks attract buyers from as far away as New England, according to Cozart. It's the first store travelers on Interstate 85 encounter as they head south on a hunt for fireworks.

Loud fireworks are most

popular among men and younger people. Women want a colorful show, according to Cozart.

The store manager almost blushes when asked his favorite new firework out this year. The package shows a middle-aged woman talking on the phone with a child in the background. It's called One Bad Mother.

"It's unbelievable. Lots of color, lots of noise, spectacular," Cozart said.

While fireworks can be fun, there is a downside. Across the United States in 2002, 9,300 people were injured; over \$35 million in damages were caused; and 23,200 fires were started, according to FEMA.

Fire Chief Frank Burns offers these safety tips: children under age 12 should not use fireworks; children over 12 should only use fireworks with adult supervision; fireworks should only be lighted away from homes and dead grass.

WINN-DIXIE

From 1A

close," Linda Carpenter said Monday.

The company will keep open some of its dairy and Chek Cola operations in Louisiana and Florida but others are for sale.

Kings Mountain's other

two grocery stores, Food Lion and Harris Teeter, also are located on U.S. 74 Bypass. Food Lion is less than a mile west of Winn-Dixie and Harris Teeter is on the far eastern end of town.

Harris Teeter manager Mike Meehan said he expects his store will get more business but doesn't

know how much. Food Lion manager John Siak could not be reached for comment.

As part of its bankruptcy plan, Winn-Dixie is closing all stores in the Carolinas, Virginia, Tennessee and some stores in Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and the

Bahamas.

The affected stores probably will close by late summer, according to Wortham.

Employees which stay with the store through its closure will get a severance package, Wortham said.

The local store manager said she was not allowed to comment on the closing.

COUNCIL

From 1A

Federal Voting Rights Act.

To create staggered terms under the DeVane plan, the mayor, the two ward representatives with the most votes and the at-large repre-

sentative with the most votes would have gotten the first four-year seats. Then at the next election the remaining council members would have had to run again.

Those seats would be four-year terms.

In a written statement, DeVane said while his ill-

ness had affected his motor skills, most noticeably speech, it had not affected other abilities. He also said that he had beat cancer three times and intended to beat Lou Gehrig's disease.

DeVane called himself the "driving force" behind the hotel occupancy tax which

has generated \$150,000 for tourism development. Other accomplishments he listed were the sign ordinance, the city keeping City Lake and Lake Davidson, a sewer extension policy and being an early supporter of both City Manager Greg McGinnis and the YMCA.

Mayor to file for reelection

Kings Mountain Mayor Rick Murphrey has announced he will seek re-election. Murphrey said he will file with the Cleveland County Board of Elections on Friday. The filing period runs from July 1 to Aug. 5.

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E-mail: heraldnews@kingsmountainherald.com

Gary Stewart.....Editor
gstewart@kingsmountainherald.com

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