

LOCAL

LBTD referendum request may be days away

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The city council may be called to make a decision as soon as next Tuesday about whether or not they will vote to allow a referendum to be held for liquor-by-the-drink.

Citizens for Progress, a local group of about 25 mostly nameless professionals, have been rallying support for citizens to have the chance to vote on the issue, an issue they see less as mixed beverages and more as economic development.

On Tuesday, they received support from the Cleveland County Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber voted at its meeting Tuesday afternoon to "support the city council option for a referendum to hear the voice of the citizens," said Interim Chamber President Steve Padgett.

Although Citizens for Progress representative Gina Collias has

not given an exact date as to when they plan to bring the request for a referendum before the city council, after the meeting on Tuesday, she said that it would be nice if they could bring it before the city at the next council meeting Tuesday night. "We want to be timely about it," she said. "But as soon as we feel like we're ready..."

The city had suggested before that if they wanted to vote on liquor-by-the-drink then citizens should petition for a referendum. "A petition wouldn't go to the city so that's kind of a paradox," Collias said. "A petition goes to the Board of Elections so it bypasses the city and we have elected officials that we want to do the right thing for us and let us have the right to vote."

"The council is not having to make a judgement on the merits," she said, adding that if they vote to allow a referendum then the council members are not voting in favor or against mixed bev-

erages. They will only be voting whether or not to allow the citizens to decide the issue, she said.

If the city chooses to call for a referendum, then the Board of Elections will have 60-120 days to schedule the vote and prepare the ballots. But, according to state law, the question of alcohol sells could not be added to the November election ballots.

Mixed beverages not the issue?

Citizens for Progress has argued that their stance is not so much allowing mixed beverages to be sold in Kings Mountain, but is instead allowing the availability for economic development.

"We're not requiring people to drink mixed beverages. That's not what this referendum is about. No one is making a two-drink minimum to enter the town," said Christopher Hollis, another representative of Citizens for Progress, who lives in Raleigh. "There's a lot of people, I being one, who go into a

restaurant and may not have a drink. But without that availability, the restaurant would not be there for me to go to."

Although others have argued that a city the size of Kings Mountain may not be able to attract big restaurants just on allowing LBTD alone, Collias said that the city's location makes them a better target on prospective maps.

"You've got about 45,000 cars a day passing Exit 10-B and no reason (for a driver) to take their foot off of the gas," Hollis added.

Collias also argues that this is just one part of the puzzle for progress, with each one feeding off of the other. She said that the

current efforts for economic development, like the Gateway Trails, the proposed multi-arena sporting complex and events like the Over the Mountain Triathlon have and will bring hundreds into Kings Mountain - hundreds which may be turned away to nearby cities for finer meals.

CFP backs argues with studies

Collias shared at least two studies that have been done in regards to revitalizing Kings Mountain in the past couple of years. The first study was conducted by students at Gardner-Webb University for the Mountaineer Partnership in 2005.

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LBTD - a Cherryville example?

REBECCA PISCOPO

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As talk and debated facts simmer and stir in Kings Mountain over liquor-by-the-drink, its Gaston County neighbor to the North, Cherryville, is wondering whether their decision to vote for liquor-by-the-drink on May 2, 2006 has been the right one, and if it would be a wise move for KM.

LBTD was proposed in Cherryville through a group called, Responsible Economic Progress Action Committee (REPAC), according to Richard Randall with the Cherryville Chamber of Commerce. Like Citizens for Progress in KM, it was separate from the Chamber. After much debate through the town, the council approved 3-2 to hold a referendum for LBTD. The mayor was called on to break the tie.

"The council was in favor of allowing the public the right to vote on the issue. The city was not involved in promoting or discouraging the passage," stated Cherryville City Manager David Hodgkins.

He recalled supporters of LBTD arguing that other communities around Cherryville (Shelby, Lincolnton, Gastonia, and Dallas) already had it.

"You look to your neighbors

and don't see people laying around in the gutters drunk. Those towns aren't going downhill because they, all of a sudden had a mixed drink," Hodgkins said, giving an example of one of the arguments he heard.

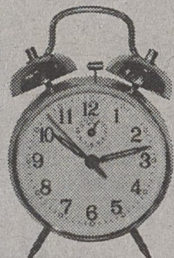
The group also argued that LBTD would bring in more restaurants and improve economic development.

The referendum for LBTD passed with 61% (725) of the votes in favor and 49% (695) against.

But did LBTD bring progress?

Reverend Dr. Vince Hefner of First Baptist Church in Cherryville said that mixed beverage hasn't been as positive a denominator for economic development. See CHERRYVILLE, Page 3

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