

Town's beverage measure fizzles

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A proposed ordinance regulating the transfer, possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages on public property within the town limits of Chesapeake Beach was the subject of a public hearing Thursday, Aug. 21. The negative reaction to the proposal prompted the councilman who requested it to subsequently ask that it not be voted on during that evening's town council meeting.

The measure was proposed by Councilman Patrick J. "Irish" Mahoney, who said based on research conducted by Town Attorney Elissa Levan, municipalities such as Chesapeake Beach must pass their own regulations regarding the "open carry" of alcoholic drinks.

Mahoney stated Maryland law regarding consumption of alcohol in public makes jurisdictions and municipalities responsible for enacting statutes.

According to the ordinance drafted by Levan, "it has come to the attention of the mayor and town council that persons are bringing and consuming alcoholic beverages onto town property in an unregulated fashion that poses a threat to the public health, safety and welfare by increasing the potential for misconduct and nuisance conduct associated with public intoxication."

Members of the public and some of Mahoney's fellow councilmen didn't see it that way.

Greg Morris of the Richfield Station Homeowners' Association stated he didn't "understand the logic." Noting that he and his neighbors had a large get-together this summer that would have been in violation of the statute had it been in effect, Morris asked, "are we trying to stop block parties?"

Mahoney expressed confidence that local law enforcement would apply common sense and discretion when enforcing the ordinance.

"I am not for legislation for the sake of creating legislation," said Councilman Stewart Cumbo. "This is far-reaching." Cumbo noted the town recently banned consumption of alcoholic beverages at Brownie's Beach and has posted signs announcing the prohibition. "We have remedies in this town."

"There are laws on the books that can be enforced," Councilman Eric Reinhardt added.

"We don't need a shotgun to kill a mosquito," said Councilman Jeff Krahling, who added the town needed to identify a "specific problem" before taking any action.

Mahoney indicated he was trying to ban consumption of alcohol in public gathering places like Veterans Park and Kellam's Field. "Maybe we can give this issue a relook," he said, adding that specifically mentioning those two town venues in the ordinance would prove more favorable.

During the meeting when the council was in the process of amending and approving the agenda, Mahoney requested a scheduled vote on the proposed ordinance be deleted. The vote on his request passed 5-to-1 with Reinhardt voting opposed. Later, Reinhardt said he voted against removing the decision on the ordinance from the agenda because he wanted to vote to kill it.

Other meeting highlights included Mayor Bruce Wahl's announcement that 20 people have applied for the town's vacant treasurer's post while the town administrator's job has drawn 60 applicants. Wahl said the treasurer's candidates have been winnowed down to a final three and town councilmembers will get an opportunity to meet the finalists. Wahl will recommend a candidate to the council for appointment.

Special Events and Economic Development Coordinator Connie O'Dell announced Ledo Pizza is returning to Chesapeake Beach. The legendary pizzeria will be occupying two units of a strip mall located next to the North Beach Volunteer Fire Department on Route 261. "They hope to be open by late September," O'Dell stated.

Town Engineer Paul Woodburn announced that some preliminary work has begun on the Fishing Creek Bridge. In his submitted report Woodburn stated "monthly coordination meetings are being held. The project has been bid and an award is still anticipated for November." The bridge spans Fishing Creek on Route 261.

With only a few more days left in the Chesapeake Beach Water Park's 2014 season, Park General Manager Marilyn VanWagner announced the facility's lifeguards had their "final unannounced operational audit by our Aquatics Safety Instructor Training Company, Ellis and Associates Incorporated. The guards received an "exceeds" for the third time this season. This qualifies our water park for the first time ever to receive the Jeff Ellis Safety Award, which only comes with a season of perfect audits."

The water park patrons and lifeguards weren't the only ones getting soaked this summer. Prior to the Aug. 21 meeting Levan and five members of the town council—Mahoney, Reinhardt, Krahling, Robert Carpenter and Dr. Valerie Beaudin—all responded to the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge in front of town hall. The councilmembers challenged their counterparts from North Beach to do likewise.

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