

FM Council approves later alcohol sales

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Flower Mound restaurants now have the option of serving alcohol two hours later.

Monday, the Flower Mound Town Council unanimously voted to extend business hours for alcohol sales from midnight to 2 a.m.

Restaurants would have the choice of serving alcohol until 2 a.m. or stopping at midnight.

Town council members agreed that it's safer and economically more beneficial to extend the hours.

Council member Tom Hayden listed many local restaurant owners or managers who he contacted to get their feedback. He said the locally-owned restaurants supported the extended hours, though the managers of national restaurants were indifferent to the idea because they close at 11 p.m. anyway.

"When we do a survey with entities that have to close (at 11 p.m.), what's absent in those surveys are those (national) entities that can stay open later," said council member Al Filidoro. "And the reason they're absent is because they won't come here. We roll up the sidewalks at midnight. Yet, the last council spent over a year trying to get the River Walk, which we envision as being an entertainment venue. This issue isn't only about businesses that are here now, it's about businesses that are not."

Five residents or local restaurant owners also encouraged the sale extension. Sean Reagan, who was representing Little Pete's Lake Grapevine, said many Flower Mound restaurant owners want the later hours to keep patrons in town and for them not to go to other cities.

"For example, customers might not even consider a restaurant in Flower Mound for New Years Eve if they shut down at midnight," Reagan said. "It would be Happy New Years, see you later. They would go to Grapevine and continue throughout the night."

Others said the extension would help some restaurant owners who have seen a decrease in business as a result of the smoking ban the town implemented about a year ago.

Reagan said allowing for later sales would also help bring in customers when there are west-coast games being televised, which often don't end until after midnight.

Plus, he said, it would keep customers at one location where their alcohol consumption could be monitored instead of going to another restaurant where they would start drinking all over again.

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Steve Dixon encouraged the town staff to conduct a semi-annual review during the first year to examine how the extension has impacted safety, and then an annual review thereafter.

State law allows counties with a population of 500,000 or more based on the 2000 census to allow restaurants to serve alcohol until 2 a.m. Denton County's population was 432,976 based on the census, so for the majority of Flower Mound that sits in Denton County, the town needed to pass the ordinance.

On May 4, 2009, the council, which different members than the current council, denied a motion, 3-2, to extend the alcohol sales. The town staff was directed at last month's planning retreat to present another ordinance.