

ALCOHOL CONTROL COMMISSION

Monday, June 21, 2021

The Alcohol Control Commission met at 5:00 p.m. this date in the City Commission Chambers of City Hall, 601 Broad Street. Monica Sheppard, Chair, was present along with Harold Morgan, Steve VanMeter, Billy Cooper, and Commissioner Quick. John Kendrick was absent. Assistant City Attorney Stephen Moseley and Major Rodney Bailey were also present.

Minutes – May 17, 2021

The minutes of the May 17, 2021 meeting, as submitted in writing by the Secretary, were approved by unanimous consent.

Calhoun EZ Stop, 618 Calhoun Avenue

At the May 17, 2021 meeting, a License Hearing was held for Calhoun EZ Stop, 618 Calhoun Avenue. This establishment had been charged by the Georgia Department of Revenue and the Rome Police Department for selling alcohol to a person under 21 years of age. This violation occurred during investigations conducted earlier in 2021. There was no representation from Calhoun EZ Stop at the April or May ACC meetings. At the May ACC meeting, the Hearing was conducted and recommendation was forwarded to the City Commission that the Beer Package License at this establishment be suspended indefinitely. The establishment could appear at the June Alcohol Control Commission meeting and ask for reinstatement.

A representative at the Calhoun EZ Stop was at the May 24th City Commission meeting and apologized for being out of the county and not able to attend the Hearings. Ultimately, the City Commission approved a two-week suspension of the Beer Package License and a \$500 monetary penalty. Secretary Smith reported that this suspension has been served, the penalty paid, and the license has been reinstated.

Public Consumption Request – River District Arts Fest

Ms. Megan Otwell, of the Downtown Development Authority, was present to request approval for the public consumption of alcohol for the June 26, 2021 River District Arts Fest. The public consumption area would be the Business Improvement District for the hours of 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Ms. Otwell explained that persons visiting the Arts Fest will be asked to not bring their own alcohol, but to purchase it from one of the pouring establishments within the BID District. They are expecting at least twelve vendors for this event and three musicians.

Mr. VanMeter moved to approve the request as submitted. Mr. Morgan seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Downtown Open Container Trial Period

The topic of allowing alcohol consumption in downtown Rome on public property was once again addressed by the Alcohol Control Commission. This topic was studied in detail in 2017, and a recommendation was made for adoption by the Alcohol Control Commission to the City Commission. The City Commission did not adopt that recommendation. In 2020, the topic of open containers was once again approved by the Alcohol Control Commission (via email correspondence since no live meetings were being held). The 2020 effort also failed to gain passage at the City Commission (failed via a 3-5 vote).

Downtown Development Director Aundi Lesley was present to report on a survey conducted with downtown business owners, residents, and other community members. Ms. Lesley stated that 115 business owners were surveyed; 105 of those persons support the open container trial period for 90 days; five business owners expressed their opposition, and five business owners were neutral. Of the 53 downtown residents surveyed, 51 of those are in favor of the open container trial period. Two expressed their opposition. Ms. Lesley also presented various demographic statistics for residents and other community members. Of the 71 community members surveyed, 69 were in favor of the open container concept, with only 2 opposed.

The ACC is aware that there have been many one-day open container events held in downtown Rome over the past several years, and there are no known problems that occurred during these events. There are 30 or more Georgia cities that currently allow some type of open public consumption, and these cities all report positive impacts. The City of Cartersville is one of the more recent cities to try the open container concept on a trial basis. Ms. Lesley cited some specific examples of cities such as Gainesville that report overwhelmingly positive impacts from the open container concept.

Rome Police Major Rodney Bailey was present and was asked his opinion of this matter. Mr. Bailey stated that the Police Department does not oppose the trial period and that they will provide their feedback to the ACC, DDA, and City Commission during and after the trial period, if it is approved. Mr. Billy Cooper had several comments and questions during the ACC discussion of this topic including, if during the trial period, consumption should be allowed as early as the proposed 11 a.m. There is some thought that some of the groups that visit Rome, such as the geocachers, would likely enjoy having the option to have an alcoholic beverage during their activities which sometime begin in the morning.

Mr. VanMeter moved for the ACC to approve the concept as presented today and recommend to the City Commission that the 90-day trial period for downtown open container be allowed. The period would be applicable from 11 a.m. until 11 p.m.

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday during the 90-day trial period. Mr. Morgan seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Ms. Lesley explained that she will make a presentation to the Rome City Commission during their Caucus Session on June 28th. The proposed ordinance could then go before the City Commission for First Reading on July 12th and Second Reading and vote on July 26th. If approved, the 90-day trial period will begin on August 5th and extend through Saturday, October 30th.

Police Report

Rome Police Major Rodney Bailey was present and reported there were no incidences at alcohol establishment to discuss.

Adjourned

With there being no further business, Chair Sheppard adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

Joseph F. Smith
City Clerk