

Guns 'no,' Garter 'yes,' cemetery water bill 'maybe' per CJ Council actions

Three significant, somewhat controversial matters attracted a standing-room-only crowd to a lengthy meeting of the Cave Junction City Council in City Hall on Monday night, June 9.

Major topics, all involving citizen protests, were:

*A one-month water bill of \$50,854 for Laurel Cemetery Association.

*A proposed ordinance that would have made gun ownership mandatory.

*A potentially detrimental license recommendation to Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) regarding Art's Red Garter Steakhouse & Saloon.

In connection with the latter were approximately 40 minutes of remarks during Comments from the Public. Some of them focused on an early morning scuffle outside the business on May 26, with citizens noting a problem with parental supervision, and what some see as a lack of proper response by Josephine County Sheriff's Office.

All the statements, most of which drew applause, were complimentary toward the business and the actions of its employees in connection with the May 26 incident. Especially noted were the positive efforts made by owner Linda Sallman to help keep the Red Garter a nice place to visit and free of problems requiring law enforcement.

Andrea Thomas, of Nacho Mama's, refuted a report in last week's *Illinois Valley News* that injuries suffered by three employees were minor. She stated that one employee likely will face permanent disability because of an attack by a group of young persons.

Thomas agreed with comments by Mary Orton that unless those who attacked the Red Garter employees are punished, the young people will get the wrong message about the consequences of wrongdoing.

Sallman told the mayor and council that her business is improperly being accused of constituting a special problem. She noted that although Sheriff Gil Gilbertson reported 18 incidents at the Garter during the past 12 months, most of them had nothing to do with the business itself, but were either nearby or involved persons who came onto the property.

Mayor Tony Paulson and the council told Sallman that details were not provided in the sheriff's report. They came close to apologizing to her for the lack of clarification in the report, but noted that Gilbertson had made it clear he didn't at the time have the details available.

Patron Debbie Wilson



The audience filled the council chamber Monday night, June 9. (Photo by *Illinois Valley News*)

also pointed out the "discrepancy of calls." She characterized negative comments about the Garter in connection with its liquor license as "a witch hunt." She said that at least 94 percent of Garter patrons are good people and not trouble-makers.

Sallman recounted steps taken at the Garter to make it a pleasant, safe place. She noted that additionally, large lights will be installed to shine on the rear parking lot, where there have been some incidents; that she is changing hours so that liquor will not be served after midnight on weekdays and not after 1 a.m. on weekends.

She brought copies of her "86 list," which contains 127 names of those who have been kicked out of the business and are not allowed to ever return because of violations including drug use and vulgarity. She gave the council copies of those house rules, and noted that signs always have been posted on entry doors about persons under age 21 not being admitted, and that there are signs prohibiting loitering.

"You have a real problem with our teens," she said, to applause.

Many persons, including some employees, spoke favorably about the Garter and the way it is operated. They lauded Sallman for her work.

Dave Malone, Garter manager, was one of those pointing out that the business is extremely popular with persons because of its family atmosphere. The lounge and restaurant are well-liked by various groups including alumni groups, teachers and others who gather, he and others stated.

Input was concluded by the mayor, who said, "We need to squelch this," in reference to comments that had been made during the May 27 council meeting about problems at the Garter.

The council and mayor concurred that a recommendation to OLCC, that the Garter's liquor license be issued conditionally, be tossed out.

It was noted that

Sallman's efforts, including a surveillance video camera at the entrance and having "bouncers," also known as "doormen," to keep out under-age persons, make it clear that she is doing all possible to meet safety and OLCC requirements.

Regarding the cemetery district bill, said to have been caused by a broken water line, it was decided that the meter be removed and tested.

Joel Perkins represented the district, and speaking to the matter were district President Virginia Gilliam and Secretary Kathy Webb. The upshot, besides the plan to have the meter checked, is that the district "has no money; that if it had to pay the bill it would be bankrupt; and that the city would have to take over the cemetery."

"That's the last thing we need," said Councilman Don Moore, to some laughter.

It was decided that the district will pay a fee for removal and testing as to the accuracy of the meter. Webb will be advised of the cost, and it will be between \$50 and \$100, it was indicated.

If testing by a laboratory shows a variance of at least 2 percent, the district will not have to pay the fee, and the water charge will be forgiven.

Webb asked if the city had noticed that it was missing more than 2 million gallons of water. The mayor said it was thought that maybe a lot of people were watering their lawns.

Webb also commented, "Where is this water? We

haven't seen it." It seems that the water went underground, but cemetery officers seem dubious about that.

Additionally, there was a hint from the council that if the billing is upheld, perhaps some arrangement could be reached for payment of a lesser amount.

As for the proposed ordinance about guns and ammunition being required by heads of households, that item was dropped 5-0 by the council after some discussion and public comment, all of it in opposition.

It was a matter of being rejected, not with a bang, but with a whimper.

At the end of the two-hour meeting, Kerby resident John Bowler told the council that they had erred in that in essence by holding a quasi-public hearing without notice, they disenfranchised those who would have spoken in favor.

The first part of the meeting was SRO with more than 70 in attendance. After the cemetery district matter, approximately 30 persons left the council chamber. But that still left some 40 persons, who stayed until after the Red Garter discussion. The audience then dwindled to a handful of persons.

There was extensive commentary by audience members about the plan to amend the city municipal code "to address the safety and security of the citizens."

Many attached disapproving tags to their comments, stating that the plan

was "a really bad idea, and unenforceable." Some noted that the right to bear arms already exists.

Several said that they are not against guns, but that making it mandatory to have one is not right. The planned ordinance, although dropped by motion from Councilor Margaret Miller and seconded by Moore, included the notation that heads of households "who conscientiously oppose maintaining firearms" would be exempt.

The revised, nonactive

ordinance also included a phrase that the discharge of weapons is prohibited in city limits "except in the defense of one's person, as permitted by Oregon Revised Statute 161.219." City Recorder Jim Polk was instructed to add that portion to the city's existing ordinance.

Polk, writing as a private citizen and not as city recorder, registered his opposition to the proposed ordinance in a letter to the council.

BULLETIN: The city announced Tuesday morning, June 10 that the Laurel Cemetery District bill is actually \$4,500. The higher amount was due to a miscalculation. Details are pending.

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