

FILE PHOTO

Sunday alcohol sales will likely be legal in the city of Seneca before Christmas, a move city officials and business owners say will bring an increase in customers and earnings. City Council members unanimously approved an ordinance allowing Sunday alcohol sales at a meeting Tuesday night.

Leaders: Alcohol sales will boost Sunday business

BY NORMAN CANNADA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Many local business leaders say the legalization of Sunday alcohol sales in Seneca will bring more customers and earnings into the city.

Members of the City Council opened the door for that to happen by approving a final reading of an ordinance allowing the sale of alcohol on Sundays at a special-called meeting Tuesday night.

City officials said they plan to send the required paperwork to the S.C. Department of Revenue in the next couple of days. After the paperwork arrives, the state will likely approve Seneca's request in two to three weeks, City Attorney Mike Smith said.

Stuart Pohl, owner of The Spot on the Alley on Ram Cat Alley, said he expects to see a 15-percent increase in business.

"We're excited," said Pohl. "My regular customers are going to Greenville and Anderson on Sundays. They are eating and drinking on Sundays; they're just not doing it here."

The ordinance allows establishments with appropriate ABC permits to serve alcoholic beverages on Sundays, as well as permitting retail stores to sell beer and wine.

Voters approved a referendum paving the way for Sunday alcohol sales in the Nov. 6 election. The council approved first reading of the ordinance a week later.

Pohl, who was active in getting the council to allow the referendum, said his employees are looking forward to opening on Sundays.

"Our employees are looking forward to picking up a couple of extra shifts, especially in this economy," he said. "We will draw customers from North Carolina, Georgia and Pickens County."

Pohl said once the state approves Seneca, establishments that already have a license to sell alcohol can pay an additional $3,050 fee for a one-year permit to sell alcohol on Sundays. Local businesses can choose to purchase a one-day permit for $200. The money from those fees will go back to the city, Pohl said.

Sandra Jones of the Greater Oconee Chamber of Commerce said she expects Sunday alcohol sales to help local businesses.

"I believe it will improve business for restaurants," she said. "If someone is going out to lunch or dinner on a Sunday and they want a glass of wine or a beer with their meal, they have had to go outside the county. If they have the choice, I think they will prefer to stay closer."

Jones said she believes some establishments in the city that have not been open on Sundays will consider Sunday openings as a result of the new law.

Not all businesses are convinced Sunday alcohol sales will mean more cash for the city.

John Angell, who owns J. Peters Grill and Bar locations in Seneca, Anderson, Greenville and Fountain Inn, said he has not made a decision about opening on Sundays.

"I've got a lot of thinking to do about that," Angell said. "I don't know if alcohol sales will increase business. We will not open right away (after the state approves Sunday sales in Seneca). The jury is still out."

ncannada@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6684