More action needed before Sunday alcohol sales permits can be issued

BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Now that Sunday alcohol sales referendums have passed in Oconee County, Clemson and Pendleton, business owners in those areas will have to wait a bit longer before obtaining Sunday sales permits.

Oconee County Chamber of Commerce executive director Jillian Lusk said the passing of the referendum guarantees it will move forward, but there are some "legal steps the county would have to take" thereafter.

According to Oconee County administrator Scott Moulder, Oconee will have to certify the results of the referendum and then submit them by a form provided by the S.C. Department of Revenue. Moulder said Wednesday the council has already started that process and after certification, businesses should be able to apply with the alcohol beverage licensing office.

"There's no projection at this time as to when that will be available — DOR has recommended businesses who have questions to call the alcohol beverage licensing (office)," Moulder said.

Stuart Pohl, owner of The Spot on Ram Cat Alley in Seneca, was a part of the

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effort to legalize Sunday sales in Seneca in 2012 and said he immediately got a permit for his restaurant once the city submitted its paperwork.

"The city attorney had to do some sort of paperwork with Columbia, and I know once that was completed I went to Greenville to get my license," Pohl said. "I didn't get my license until Dec. 16, so it was probably a month-long process."

The City of Seneca was the only municipality within the county with Sunday alcohol sales prior to this week, but Moulder said all the county's municipalities will be covered under the referendum passed Tuesday.

Unofficial votes provided by the Oconee County board of elections and registration showed the county's alcohol sales referendum passed 11,380 to 8,890 — with 56.14 percent of voters approving it and 43.86 percent voting against it. The referendum includes on- and off-premise sales.

Voters in the City of Clemson passed their Sunday sales referendum by a vote of 2,254 (72.6 percent) to 851 (27.4 percent), according to unofficial votes released by the South Carolina Election Commission.

City administrator Rick Cotton said Wednesday he could not confirm when the referendum would go into effect for Clemson, and he is waiting for the city's attorney to inform council about the next steps regarding the city's current ordinance, which prohibits the sale of alcohol between midnight Saturday and sunrise Monday morning.

"That's kind of where we're at, we haven't done any research yet because we were waiting on the results of the vote — we were not going to be presumptive that it would pass or not pass," Cotton said.

Pendleton passed its referendum 471 (69 percent) to 211 (31 percent), according to unofficial votes. Municipal clerk Amber Barnes said the town's referendum designates on- and off-premise sales, meaning all restaurants and grocery and convenience stores could obtain Sunday sale permits.

Barnes said an ordinance would have to be passed twice by town council but said the council has yet to confirm dates for when it would vote on the ordinance.

christina@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6681



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Tiger Town Tavern manager Shane Vaught works behind the bar earlier this year. Although Oconee County, Clemson and Pendleton residents voted Tuesday to allow Sunday alcohol sales, no official dates have been confirmed for when businesses can obtain permits to start ...