Donaldsonville council votes for video poker

By CARRIE PAGLEY
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DONALDSONVILLE — The Donaldsonville City Council on Monday unanimously voted to legalize video poker within the city limits.

The City Council members said that because Donaldsonville is a Home Rule Charter municipality, they can make the decision themselves even though video poker has been voted out in Ascension Parish, City Attorney Charles Long said.

“We're going to challenge the system,” Mayor Harold Capello said. “Why have a home rule charter if we're not going to home rule? That would be like letting your neighbor tell you what to do in your own home.”

Local business owners approached the council requesting video poker be legalized after a parish voters in statewide referendum voted video poker out in Ascension Parish. Video poker outlets may continue operating until the effective date of the vote this summer.

“We believe it was an infringement of our home rule charter,” Long said.

In a breakdown of the vote, Long said the people of Donaldsonville approved video poker. That, in part, led to the adoption of the ordinance by the City Council.

The council also held a public hearing on the proposed ordinance Monday before the regular council meeting. No citizens expressed any dissent, Long said.

The council also adopted a motion that will allow Long to take the preliminary steps in annexing properties to the city of Donaldsonville. The City Council is approaching land owners from the eastern boundary of the city along La. 3089 to the La. 70 intersection along that route to the area near the Sunshine Bridge. Long will determine if those property owners are interested in becoming part of the City of Donaldsonville.

If they are, a petition will be prepared for property owners to sign and approach the council with, Long said.

The possible annexation, which could take as little as two or three months, offers advantages to both the city and the property owners, Long said.

It will allow the city “to expand available area in the city limits to use for commercial developments,” he said.

Property owners will have better water pressure because they will be connected to Donaldsonville's water system, which will also lower fire insurance rates, Long said.

Property values should rise from 20 to 25 percent, finance commissioner Heldon “Jay” Weil said.

“The city is looking to derive some economic impact from this,” said Glenn Shaheen of Glenn Shaheen & Associates Inc.

Shaheen presented to the council maps outlining the areas for possible annexation. On top of increased commercial revenue, 100 percent of any video poker revenue would come back to the city, he added.