CROWLEY — The Crowley City Council made little change in existing alcohol consumption laws during a heated meeting Tuesday before an overflow crowd of citizens who were clearly anti-alcohol.

Many of them carried signs and large helium-filled balloons and wore T-shirts proclaiming their objections. They had hoped for outlawing of liquor consumption on the streets of Crowley during the annual three-day International Rice Festival in September and had come prepared to even accept a compromise of restricted hours, but neither was granted.

When Mayor Robert Istre called for a vote on the first of two ordinances following a full hour of comments from the public, the council unanimously approved a measure which provides for all three-day temporary liquor license requests to conform with city and state statutes regarding building codes, health and safety. The state law currently provides for the exemption of fairs and festivals, and Crowley had previously permitted that exemption.

The second ordinance did not suit the audience as well, however.

Approved by a vote of 5-4, that measure calls for no open containers on the streets or sidewalks with the exception of the three-day festival, further providing that during the festival only paper, plastic or plastic-foam cups would be permitted.

Councilman Jerry Horman proposed an amendment prior to the vote that would remove the festival exemption, but the amendment was defeated 5-4. The ordinance was then approved in its original form by the same 5-4 vote.

Voting to allow open container drinking on the street during the festival were Sherman Wilson, George Lee Meaux, Willie Clement, Clarence Helo and Gil Pinac. Voting against it were Horman, Daniel Henry, Clifford Broussard and Isabella de la Houssaye.

Acadia Parish Superintendent of Education Bobby Stringer said: "We had hoped to secure a compromise that would restrict alcohol on the streets until 7 p.m. each day of the festival so that our children would not be subjected to this during the hours of the children's activities."

His concentrated efforts during a recess to convince one of the five prevailing councilmen to move to reconsider were unsuccessful. After waiting for several minutes for someone to make such a motion, Mayor Istre moved on to the next item on the agenda.

During the debate just prior to voting Horman had said: "I want us to send a message to the youth of our community. I am not arguing religion or morals. I've been working with young people for many years (as an attorney), and I have yet to run across any young person in serious trouble that the root of that trouble could not be traced to the abuse of drugs or alcohol."

His remarks were met with loud cheers and applause.

Councilman Wilson said: "During this debate our political longevity has been threatened. We accept that. The very existence of our festival has been threatened. We have heard threats about a full page ad being purchased to tell people to stay away from our festival. One silly old man even implied a threat to my job. Well, tell me what you will, but don't threaten my job. This came from so-called upper class people who claim to be of high moral fiber."

Boos interrupted him, but Wilson continued: "I realize this is a hostile audience, but you must remember we represent all the people, not just those in this room tonight."