CHIEF'S REQUEST DENIED

New Bar Curfew Stands

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ST. MARTINVILLE — A 4 a.m. bar curfew in St. Martinville weathered some stormy objections last night from the police chief and a room full of worried residents.

Despite a request from Chief Jerry Curry to rescind the extended weekend curfew, the council stood by its Sept. 17 decision that added two hours to the city's closing law.

At last month's meeting, a spokesman for the bar owners said high overhead costs were hurting business and that extended operating hours would help cut these costs.

"We have to absorb these costs," said Bobby Romero, "It's hard to pass it on to the customers. It's getting harder and harder to operate and to stay open."

Trial Basis

The council adopted a new closing law on a trial basis, stressing that it can be revoked at any time.

Last night, Curry asked that the council reconsider and revoke it, now fearing the city was heading a chain reaction of 4 a.m. closings.

"We're going to be right back where we were before and jeopardize everything we've worked for in this parish," the chief stated.

Rural bar owners showed up at a Police Jury meeting two weeks ago and rallied for a 4 a.m. closing parish wide. Jurors took their request under advisement and are expected to render a decision tonight.

Flat No

Bar owners in Breaux Bridge got a flat 'no' from city councilmen there when they presented the same request last week.

St. Martinville Councilman A. Leo Thomas defended his stand for the 4 a.m. curfew by citing that residents here are driving to other places and increasing chances of drinking related accidents.

"Is a 2 a.m. curfew the answer?" he asked. "People are leaving here and going into Iberia Parish or that place in Lafayette Parish."

Curry responded that surrounding parishes are taking action to unify a 2 a.m. closing.

If St. Martinville becomes the only city with a 4 a.m. curfew bar hoppers will find their way here and the city "could end up with some trouble," he said.

One Group

City residents attending last night's meeting shared concern for the council's support of the bar owners rather than the community as a whole.

"You have deviated from your responsibilities to change the law to suit a specific group," said Glenn Champagne. "That's not what you were elected for."

Councilmen Thomas and Murphy Simon countered that they did not vote for the extension in support of one particular group.

"We didn't want our people leaving the city and getting involved in an accident on their way to another bar," Simon explained.

Champagne noted that there was no difference in whether people "come over here or go over there."

The Problem

"The problem is the consumption of alcohol," he said. "If they don't have the opportunity, they won't drink as much."

One woman in the audience commented that all she could see were "dollar signs, not human life."

"Is it worth the bucks to let people drink another two hours," she said. "If they're going to drink let them do it somewhere else after the bar closes. At least we won't have the responsibility."