New law to cut Port Allen’s Sunday drinking hours

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PORT ALLEN — Patrons of bars here will have four hours less drinking time on Sunday nights starting next month.

The Port Allen Board of Aldermen voted 3-2 Wednesday to change the closing time of 2 a.m. on Mondays.

"The new law, which takes effect in 30 days, stops retail liquor sales after 10 p.m. on Sundays," Police Chief Adrian Genre pushed for the change, citing a problem with barroom shootings and assaults late Sunday.

"We get a large influx on Sunday nights from Baton Rouge," Genre said.

Baton Rouge bars are closed Sundays, prompting many customers to cross the river to drink in Port Allen where they often cause problems, he said.

Twobar owners objected to the change at a public hearing Wednesday.

"My whole point is, I don't see how this is going to stop the shootings," said Clarence Lawrence, owner of Ace's Lounge. "It's unfair."

The earlier closing time will hurt Port Allen's sales tax revenues and hurt his business, Lawrence said.

"Why should you close me down if you have a problem with other places?" Cheers owner Jerry Dupuy asked.

"Because the problem moves," Genre said. "The crowd doesn't quit coming around."

"Every time a homicide happens and a club closes down, it doesn't stop the problem," said city police Detective Eric King.

"Closing at 10 p.m. is not going to stop all the shootings (but) I think we can uninvite some crime," Hotard said.

"Closing at Ace's when a Sunday night fight between two Baton Rouge men erupted into gunfire," Lawrence and Dupuy both suggested midnight Sunday as a compromise closing time.

"This could be devastating" not only to business owners and but for organizations holding social events on Sundays where liquor is sold, Alderman Irvrie "Ivory" Johnson said.

"It's still inviting a large crowd from the Baton Rouge area," he said. "We might have moved too rapidly on this." Hotard said he had thought long and hard about how to vote.

"If one of our policemen got killed between the hours of 10 and midnight on a Sunday night, I couldn't live with myself," he said.

In other action, the board:

• Learned from Mayor Lyn Robertson that the city was awarded a $485,000 Louisiana Community Development Block Grant for street repairs and improvements.

• Voted to set an Oct. 21 election for renewal of an existing 5-mill public safety tax. That tax brings in about $90,000 a year for the Police Department.