Rayne Council votes to close bars at 2 a.m.

RAYNE - By a vote of 3-1, with one councilman absent, the Rayne City Council has approved an ordinance establishing a 2 a.m. closing time for bars, to become effective in about 30 days.

Rayne - The council had discussed the proposed ordinance several times since receiving a letter from the Acadia Parish Police Jury several months ago asking that it approve the ordinance. Council members delayed action on it until Monday night's meeting.

The public and the press were unaware the ordinance would appear on the agenda, and there was no delegation present to object. There were several members of the Rayne Police Department on hand who spoke in favor of the ordinance, and a statement endorsing the proposal from Police Chief Peter Haure was read by Mayor Ralph Stutes.

After a member of the audience asked if this law is going to be enforced, the council was assured by Haure that he plans to enforce it. Penalty for breaking the new law will be $200 and/or 30 days in jail and possible revocation of the liquor license. The only exception in the law regards restaurants; council members said it would apply only to fully equipped and recognized restaurants, and not sandwich shops.

Voting for the ordinance were council members Vincent Chappuis, Russell Benoit and David Babineaux. Alex LaCroix voted no, and Coley Bellamy was absent.

Donald Abadie, owner of a Rayne lounge, said Tuesday afternoon that a protest is being filed with the district attorney's office seeking to nullify the council's action since the agenda had not been made public in advance.

Abadie quoted an official from the district attorney's office as saying the council was in violation of the law and would be required to delay putting the ordinance into effect and to reconsider it at a later meeting.

The Police Jury did not take action on the parish version of the law at its Tuesday meeting as it had been expected to do. Jurors agreed several meetings ago that, when the parish's municipalities had approved it, they would follow suit for the rural areas. A spokesman said Tuesday that several of the towns in the parish still have not taken action.

The city of Crowley approved the ordinance several months ago.