Resolutions aimed at more control of teen-age liquor buys

By CARL REDMAN
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The Metro Council adopted a series of resolutions Wednesday for the first half of a tough, new package making it more difficult for teen-agers to get alcohol in East Baton Rouge Parish.

In addition, the council introduced and sent to its executive committee five proposed changes in the city's alcohol beverage control ordinances. Barring problems in committee, those changes should be ready for a public hearing at the July 13 meeting of the council.

With no fanfare or comment, the council adopted a block of resolutions proposed by Councilman Doug Welborn, who sits on the special Task Force Against the Underage Purchase of Alcohol.

Welborn declined comment on the package during the council meeting but promised a full report when the package comes back for a public hearing.

After the meeting, Welborn said the resolutions are an important part of the plan developed by the special task force.

Although the city-parish has a commitment to making it harder for underage teens to buy and possess alcoholic beverages, it is still up to other segments of the community to do their part if there is going to be a reduction in alcohol abuse among local teen-agers, Welborn said.

The city-parish can't legislate all that needs to be done. The store owners must be responsible and shoulder some of the burden, and other public agencies must do their part to educate the public that alcohol abuse among teen-agers is a real problem, Welborn said.

"We have been working with all three agencies involved - the judicial, legislative and executive branches," Welborn said. "... We want to make it illegal for a juvenile to purchase alcohol. We want to see the stores educate their employees on the penalties. We want the businesses that sell alcohol to let their employees know what the law is, and we want to make the employees bear the responsibility for violating the law. We want the employee to lose his (liquor) license if he breaks the law."

In response to recommendations from the task force, the Metro Council adopted resolutions that:

• Urge the state Department of Public Safety to stamp the drivers licenses of minors with a red marking such as "MINOR" to make it easier for store clerks to identify teen-agers too young to purchase alcohol legally.
• Urge merchants to put up more signs announcing the prohibition on minors purchasing alcoholic beverages and urging establishment of a "hot line" to report illegal sales.
• Urge stiff penalties through Family Court for minors arrested for using false identification and urging establishment of a system for supplemental pay for police officers who testify as witnesses in Family Court cases.
• Urge local media and law enforcement authorities to emphasize the importance of support groups in dealing with alcohol abuse by minors.
• Urge tougher enforcement and prosecution of laws against underage drinking.
• Urge tougher enforcement of laws prohibiting the purchase and sale of alcohol to minors.

The proposed amendments to the city-parish's alcohol control ordinances call for:

• Mandatory suspension of a license to sell alcohol for persons convicted of selling or distributing alcohol to minors.
• Requiring that the parish attorney or district attorney notify the Alcohol Beverage Control board of any convictions under the alcohol control ordinances.
• Requiring anyone applying for an ABC license to sign a statement acknowledging the laws pertaining to the sale of alcoholic beverages to minors.
• Mandatory fines and imprisonment for persons convicted of selling alcoholic beverages to minors.
• Requiring that the ABC board be notified before properly filed complaints can be dismissed without further investigation.