St. Mary jurors pass bar closing law

Advocate Acadiana bureau

FRANKLIN — The St. Mary Parish Police jury Wednesday passed a watered-down version of a parishwide bar closing ordinance.

By 14-1 vote, the jury approved an ordinance which will close the bars and forbid the sale of alcoholic beverages from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. Sunday through Thursday and from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. The ordinance takes effect Jan. 2.

Following discussion, a second motion was made setting the penalties for violations. The first offense would bring a $500 fine and/or up to six months in jail. The second violation would force the revocation of the operator's license.

Prior to the passage of the motion, there was much discussion concerning the hours. An amendment to the motion was made by Morgan City Juror Billy Butler calling for the bars and convenience stores to adhere to a 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. closure seven days a week. The amendment was defeated soundly.

In fighting for the original motion, Franklin Juror Albert Foulcard called St. Mary Parish a "recreational paradise" and claimed he could see no difference in closing the bars from 2 to 6 Monday through Thursday or seven days a week because "all the drunks would be on the road anyway."

A provision of the ordinance exempts bars and convenience stores from the ordinance on New Year's Eve, Christmas Eve, Mardi Gras and July 4.

However, a question about the meaning of the exemption was raised, and that prompted a heated discussion. The jury finally decided to allow bars to remain open until 4 a.m. on those holidays rather than 24 hours.

In other action, the jury:
- Decided to fund the parish Charter Commission for 1983. The commission tried twice before to obtain $7,000 it termed necessary to complete its study of a new form of parish government.
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- Upheld a motion to fine small-animal Superintendent Joe Hayes $25 a day per dog for any animal not destroyed at the parish animal shelter within a 10-day period.
- Passed a motion to designate a new tourist commission to serve the western portion of St. Mary Parish as well as to set in motion a possible merger between the new commission and the Atchafalaya Delta Tourist Commission.