

Server training ordinance considered

BY: Kevin Bottrell

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Torrington minors looking to obtain alcohol may soon have a more difficult time. At their March 4 meeting, the Torrington City Council approved on first reading an ordinance that would require mandatory server training for any employee that has been employed by a liquor establishment for 90 days. This training will focus on identifying minors, spotting fake I.D. and confronting intoxicated patrons. It will likely be provided for free in town through the state TIPS (Training for Intervention Procedures) program.

Liquor license holders will also be required to produce proof of this training before their licenses can be renewed. Torrington Mayor Leroy Schafer said employees who have been with an establishment longer than 90 days at the time the ordinance is passed would still be expected to go through the training. The ordinance was created with input from the comprehensive community coalition as well as several area liquor license holders.

At the meeting, the city council also approved the continuation of liquor licenses for city establishments that serve alcohol with several exceptions. Three establishments had violated liquor laws by selling to minors during police compliance checks. The council will request the owners of these establishments appear at the next council meeting to work out these issues before their licenses are approved.

Police Chief Billy Janes said the alcohol server ordinance would likely solve those issues.

In other business, Herb Doby's request for a conditional use permit to turn the house at 320 E 21st Ave. was reconsidered. Doby's request was denied at the previous council meeting. Doby appeared in defense of his request, saying that he has spoken to the majority of other homeowners in the area, who had no objections to the installation of a small law office in the former rental property. The council's previous concerns had also included lack of residential housing in Torrington, a concern that Doby said he disagrees with, citing several classified ads regarding housing.

"There are lots and lots of houses for rent, houses for sale, apartments for rent," Doby said.

Doby said he had outgrown the room he currently rents from attorney Jerry Smith and that the building would likely only house himself, a secretary and one client at a time. Doby stated that most houses of this size sell as rental properties or businesses.

"You're not going to sell a one bedroom, one bathroom house that someone's going to live in," Doby said.

The council approved the request 4-1 on reconsideration.

"The comments that Mr. Doby made I wish we had heard last time," councilman Ted Kinney said.

Schafer was the dissenting vote, citing concerns about an increased amount of cars needing to park in a residential area. Doby said he felt the property's one parking space and street parking were sufficient.

Joint Powers Board Chairman Cactus Covello appeared before the council to give an update on the new fire station. The low bid came in over budget by \$720,000. Covello said he is confident that by tweaking components such as insulation and exterior wall thickness, he can reduce the cost by about \$200,000 "without hurting the looks or intent of the building."

Covello said he is hoping to move as quickly as possible to procure block grant funds to help with the remaining amount.

"There are a few loop holes yet to jump through and obviously some funding to procure," Covello said.