

### **Maryville Raises Bar-Entry Age To 21**

#### **News**

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(MaryvilleDailyForum.com) - The Maryville City Council voted 4-1 at its regular meeting Monday night to ratchet up the minimum entry age for bars and taverns inside the city limits to 21 effective July 1.



Twenty-one, is of course, also the minimum legal drinking age in Missouri, but Maryville set a 19 entry standard back in the 1990s. Ironically the age limit was originally adopted not to make things easier on college-age revelers but to keep high school students out of the bars.

Before the age-19 minimum was established anyone of any age could enter a bar as long as they didn't consume alcohol unless they were 21.

Last May the council voted 3-2 to leave the longstanding age-19 rule alone. Weighing in that decision was the argument set forth by the Northwest Missouri State University Student Senate, which took the stance that allowing under-21 patrons into bars gives college students a safe place to dance and socialize.

Upping the age standard, students told the council, would lead to an increase in the number of "house parties" at private residences where IDs aren't checked and police don't patrol.

But in the 10 months since the council's initial vote, the issue continued to simmer as municipal staff, working under the governing board's direction, began crafting a series of ordinances styled as a "comprehensive policy" governing public alcohol consumption.

As the proposed policy began to take shape, Council Member Jeff Funston, and then Mayor Jim Fall, began to have second thoughts. Those thoughts turned into action two weeks ago when both men signaled that they would vote for raising the age limit to 21 if a second vote were held. The shift meant that Renee Riedel became the lone holdout for the age-19 standard, which was opposed from the beginning by council members Ron Moss and Glenn Jonagan.

On Monday, Funston noted that most other college towns in Missouri have adopted an age-21 standard. He also dismissed comments by a number of people in the gallery, including university/council liaison and Student Senator Dannen Merrill, that barring 19- and 20-year-olds would leave college students with no place to go.

"I don't know that it's the City Council's place to find entertaining things for 19- and 20-year-olds to do," Funston said.

Fall admitted that he found his decision to change his vote a difficult one, but decided in the end that keeping under-21 patrons out of drinking establishments boiled down to a safety issue. "From the information I am seeing, and from what I have read, binge drinking is almost, if not, epidemic," Fall said. "I think this is a health issue, and that is the reason I have changed my mind."

Fall has stated several times that the entry-age question is part and parcel of the comprehensive policy, which, if ultimately passed, will likely contain restrictions on "nuisance parties" and drinking on streets, sidewalks and in other public spaces.

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<http://www.kttn.com/kgofm/modules/news/article.php?storyid=111280>

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Other proposed components of the plan include noise restrictions, a ban on all-you-can-drink specials and server training. However, municipal staff is lukewarm about the city's ability to effectively put such rules in place. Riedel, the council's sole woman and youngest member, criticized the comprehensive plan as a "fragmented puzzle" and questioned why the age minimum had been put "on a fast train" ahead of the other measures.

She called on her colleagues to ask themselves whether "our comprehensive angle wasn't just an excuse" to raise the bar age.

Mick Hoskey, who owns Molly's, a bar and dance club on the east side of the courthouse square, challenged the council to "come to the bar on a busy night and actually see what you are looking to change and eliminate."