

Booze Tax Looks Increasingly Unlikely

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

It didn't take long for it to become apparent at last (Tuesday) night's Kodiak City Council work session that there was little if any support for raising the tax on alcohol to help pay for the soaring costs of the new police station and jail.

A pair of ordinances will be before the council at its regular meeting on Thursday night to raise the tax from six percent to 10 percent, but given the comments from most of the council members, neither of them are likely to pass.

More than a dozen members of CHARR, the trade group that represents bars and liquor stores, were in attendance. Carmen Lunde (lun-DEE), the group's public relations person, said asking one user group to pay for a community facility is unfair:

-- (Booze 1 34
sec "and...
happen, I wouldn't have voted for it.")

Councilman
Jack Maker agreed with Lunde (lun-DEE):

-- (Booze 2 28
sec "…
paid for by the people who use it most.")

He added
that while charging more for alcohol may sound like a good idea on its surface,
opposition by CHARR would surely derail it:

-- (Booze 3 34
sec "…
that sounds… ah … wait a minute.")

The city
needs more money to pay for the police station and jail because costs have
jumped about 10 million dollars this year. Councilman Charlie Davidson pushed
to abandon the Mill Bay Road site where groundwork is already being done, but
City Manager Linda Freed said another redesign and further delays would not
save the city any money. She said the station will never been cheaper to build
than it is right now.

Councilman
Tom Walters suggested redesigning the jail portion of the building unless the
State of Alaska pays for a larger portion of the its construction.

-- (Booze 4 26
sec "…
then we ought to look towards the holding tank.")

A holding

tank would keep prisoners for only 24 hours until they are arraigned, at which point the state would have to ship them to the mainland. The design of the jail calls for over 20 beds, which would allow some criminals to serve short sentences locally.

Besides the two alcohol tax increases, the council will also have an ordinance to put a 6-million-dollar bond issue before the voters to pay for the cost increases of the new police station and jail.

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