

Petition drive initiated to permit Sunday liquor sale

By Tom Prentiss

The notion that Sunday drinking in Lincoln is an impossibility may change if enough Lincoln citizens sign a petition to place the question on the May 1 ballot.

The petition drive is spearheaded by Jim Ritzman, an advertising executive and chairman of the Chamber of Commerce's convention and tourism committee.

Judy McDowell, convention director for the Chamber of Commerce, said Ritzman also is the only member of a committee called "Progressive Lincoln."

To place the question on the ballot, McDowell said, five percent of the city's registered voters must sign the petition. She said they are being circulated in the city to businesses and interested parties.

Over 4,000 names needed

"We have to come up with 4,196 signatures, I think, but of course we're shooting for a lot more," McDowell said. News of the petition is circulating through word of mouth.

McDowell said it is an important issue for people who just want to get a drink on Sunday, but is of major importance for the convention industry.

Last year, she said, over \$25 million was spent on conventions in Lincoln. Lincoln has had a hard time drawing conventions because many businesses are closed on Sunday, she said. Sunday is the starting day for most regional and national conventions.

"Lincoln has a very cosmopolitan image and many people see it as a progressive image," said McDowell.

If enough citizens sign the petitions, the Lincoln City Council will have 30 days to enact the measure or place it on the ballot.

All-day sales

If approved, it would allow beer and wine to be sold (on- and off-sale) from 6 a.m. to 12 p.m. and would allow the sale of on-sale liquor from 6 p.m. to 12 p.m. on Sundays.

McDowell said she realizes that there are many people who think the sale of liquor on Sunday is a bad idea. But, she said, those people should respect the right of those who would like to be able to have a drink.

She said it is a matter of individual choice and it makes sense to have liquor available on Sunday, when "people can go just outside of town and get it, if they want."

McDowell said it is a good idea to place the idea before the voters because Lincoln citizens have not addressed a drinking referendum of any kind since 1966. She said in 1966 Lincoln chose to allow liquor by the drink. All that was available before that was private clubs.

Turnout hinges on races

She said turnout may depend on how heated the mayor's race becomes and the seats up for election in the city council.

Last year, the city council voted to approve a proposal that would have allowed restaurants to serve alcohol, if it

could show that at least 60 percent of its gross revenue was from food sales.

Mayor Helen Boosalis vetoed the proposal on the basis it was discriminatory. The council failed to override her veto.

Local bar and liquor store owners had mixed feelings about the proposal.

Rob Cole, owner of Horsefeather's and the Water Hole, said he supports the idea. He said it would help business some but wouldn't make any drastic changes.

Sunday prohibition 'ridiculous'

"It's ridiculous that you can't go out to eat on Sunday and enjoy a cocktail with your meal," Cole said. He added that it definitely would help the convention business in Lincoln.

He said he won't be able to spend much time on it, because he is fighting the proposal to raise the drinking age to 21. If it is placed on the ballot, Cole predicts it will be a close vote.

Herm Strackbein, owner of Herm's Liquor Store, 1644 P St., said he is favor of the proposal for eating establishments but not for off-sale stores.

"I think six days a week and 17 hours a day are enough," said Strackbein. "I don't think we need the extra day."

Tom Schaefer, manager of N Street Drive In, agreed with Strackbein's comments.

"If it passed, I'm sure we'd open up," he said, "but I'm not in favor of it for off-sale stores."

Jelly Belly jumps into mayoral race

By David Ostdiek

With four dollars in his campaign fund and no party to back him yet, a former bus driver who calls himself Jelly Belly has declared he will run for mayor of Lincoln.

Jelly Belly is Barton E. Chandler, 41, who announced his candidacy Saturday after he was fired by the Lincoln Transportation System.

After getting no response from other parties, he said he went to the governor's office to seek the backing of the Republican party.

Kay Orr, executive assistant to Gov. Charles Thone, said she had not talked to Chandler yet, although he had dropped by the office. She said, however, that the governor's office won't endorse any candidate.

Carol Walker, Lancaster County Chairman of the Republican Party, said her organization has a campaign committee that assists republicans running for office in the county.

She said the committee provides help in the form of an encouragement committee and a "how-to" manual, but will not formally endorse a candidate except by vote of the Central Committee, and then only if there are no other Republicans running in the primary.

Conditions for assistance include party membership for a year. Such a case hasn't come up in the committee's two-year history, Walker said.

Union activity

Chandler said he has never been active in political parties, but has been active in unions.

In a press release, Chandler said he thinks individuals should choose whether or not to have an abortion. He also thinks family members should decide whether to put senior citizens in a home and he favors development of gasohol to lower U.S. dependence on foreign oil sources.

About the proposed change in zoning regulations, he

said he would "study the proposal and have something to say about it later."

His experience as a laborer qualifies him for the office, Chandler said.

"In my jobs, I can understand what the working man wants in service from Lincoln," he said. "The people we have (in office) don't really understand what the working man goes through. "It's a service-oriented government, he said, and "the departments have to work together."

Recent decision

Chandler, of 2856 Garfield St., said he decided to run for mayor about 10 days ago. He said the large turnover in city personnel convinced him that "there must be defects in the supervisory field."

Before working for LTS, Chandler said, he had worked for the Lincoln Sanitary Sewer System for about two years. When he was fired by LTS, Chandler said, he was told that a number of people had told LTS they would not ride in his bus anymore. Chandler said he was also asked if he had campaigned on the job. He hadn't, he said, but he did hand out some cards Friday evening that said "Vote for J.B. (Jelly Belly)."

Mail-order shoes

Chandler said he is now selling shoes for a mail-order firm and looking for another job. He plans to contest his firing.

Of 100 signatures necessary to put his name on the ballot for the April 3 primary, Chandler said he has six so far. The deadline for getting the signatures and paying a \$10 fee is March 14. So far, three candidates—Martin J. Kushner, Ray Little, and Alan M. Hansen—have filed and several others, including incumbent Helen Boosalis, have announced their candidacy.

Chandler estimated that he had a two percent chance of getting elected, compared with 30 percent for Mayor Boosalis. His support, he said, should come from students, laborers and retired people.

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