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N. Miami vote on booze in strip clubs put on hold

By Paradise Afshar
The Miami Herald

A vote on allowing alcohol to be sold in all-nude adult clubs in North Miami was postponed Tuesday night after several residents told the council they didn't know a nudie bar was coming into their neighborhood and wanted time to react.

The North Miami City Council voted 4-1 to defer the vote on lifting a ban on the sale of alcohol in adult-entertainment establishments for a least a month.

The citywide ordinance doesn't affect any specific property; however, Sunny Isles Eatery has plans to invest \$2 million into the former Locks Company building at 2050 NE 151st St., to open an adult-entertainment club.

"I was ready to vote on it," said Scott Galvin of the second-reading vote, the only one who opposed the vote to defer. "I didn't see that much will come from further discussion. I was ready to vote."

Those against the ban being overturned include residents and the Community Television Foundation of South Florida, WPBT-2.

"I think it's a terrible idea for the city of North Miami to allow alcohol to be served with adult entertainment, which we all know is strip clubs," said Brian Hart, an attorney who represents the Community Television Foundation. "Particularly since the applicant is right next to Community Television Foundation. So you're going to have a strip club, serving alcohol, next to Sesame Street."

Pastor Jack Hakimian said he fears that if North Miami, which currently doesn't have any adult-entertainment facilities, did have strip clubs it would hurt the look and feel of the community.

"The people who will come to these locations, they only care about the immediate experience, and they will drive back in their cars to Hollywood, South Beach or wherever they live and leave us dealing with the issues," Hakimian said. "Being from Los Angeles, there is a reason most states don't like mixing alcohol and full nudity. Something about when you get men together into a location and mix all those elements — you're going to have a problem."

Other concerns involved crime coming to the area as a result of the change and a concern for the impact on local children.

After a handful of people spoke against the ban, Mayor Andre Pierre suggested holding off on the vote.

“Rather than going through, I don’t mind giving the local people 30 days or 45 days to look this over,” Pierre said. “I don’t mind if this city council wants to postpone the item for another 30 to 45 days.”

Prior to wanting to open an establishment in North Miami, the Sunny Isles Eatery ran Thee Dollhouse in Sunny Isle Beach, where female dancers performed friction dances and participated in onstage showers with each other — or with customers.

“They operated a great club for people who like that sort of thing. It was safe, secure — they spent a lot of money on the club,” said Jeff Cazeau, an attorney who represents the group. “The reason they are not in business is because Sunny Isles closed everyone down in a four-block radius to create a park, so hundreds of businesses were closed down, not just this club.”

He said his clients are good people who are not running any type of business that isn’t legal.

“All we are asking is to use alcohol in the facility — it is already a permitted use, it is zoned in that district and it can be opened here as of right. All we are asking for is the alcohol use,” Cazeau said. “I would like to say this is an investment into a property that stands empty and will increase the tax base of your city. It will create employment.”

The club is expected to create 40 jobs during the construction period and 50 permanent staff positions.

He said his clients are willing to work with the community to address any concerns they may have.

“We will work with the community to help them understand what we are trying to do, and we are not trying to bring the apocalypse to the city of North Miami,” Cazeau said.