

# HardisonInk.com

---

## Business owner endorses Sunday alcoholic beverage sales in Chiefland



**Chuck Strange explains why selling alcoholic beverages on Sunday in Chiefland will benefit the residents and visitors to the area.**

### Story and Photos

**By Jeff M. Hardison © July 25, 2018 at 9:58 p.m.**

**CHIEFLAND** – Chuck Strange owns and operates Chiefland Billiards, which is the only place in the city limits of Chiefland that regularly sells alcoholic beverages for onsite consumption.

Strange told the Chiefland City Commission on Monday night (July 23) that he believes revising the city ordinance to allow alcoholic beverage sales on Sunday will help the city.

Sylvia McCullar, an opponent of alcoholic beverage sales on Sundays, spoke to the City Commission as well.

As it stands, Mayor Betty Walker and Vice Mayor Chris Jones are in favor of changing the ordinance to allow the sale of alcoholic beverages in Chiefland on Sundays.

City Commissioners Teresa Barron, Rollin Hudson and Donald Lawrence want to keep the ordinance intact.

City Commission candidate Tim West, who is running against Barron in the Aug. 7 municipal election, said he is in favor of the sales of alcoholic beverages in the city limits of Chiefland on Sundays.

Strange told the City Commission that he was unable to deliver his speech two weeks ago, when the 3-2 vote shot down the potential change of the ordinance. He was recovering from surgery that was needed.

# HardisonInk.com

---

“The city of Chiefland’s Comprehensive Plan states only one economic development goal – to improve and expand economic conditions and opportunities for its citizens and to strengthen its tax based,” Strange said as he began his presentation.

He noted the importance of tourism as an economic engine in the city. The service industry is a vital part of the trades to support tourism.

The ban of alcoholic beverage sales in Chiefland, he said, directly impacts the city’s service industry. Business interests are unable to completely meet the needs of residents and visitors on Sundays in Chiefland, Strange said. The lack of that revenue on Sundays in Chiefland, he said, hurts existing and future business interests.

“I am unable to operate on Sunday,” Strange said, “because alcohol sales constitute 60 percent of my revenue. Without that revenue, I can’t cover my overhead costs.”

By Chiefland Billiards being closed, he said, that reduces the options for residents and visitors to the Chiefland area – and they go elsewhere.

“It also decreases the likelihood that outsiders will choose to spend their time in Chiefland for the day,” he added.

Hotels and restaurants in Chiefland, he said, see reduced traffic because people are in other places as a result of not being able to buy alcohol in Chiefland on Sundays.

Strange told about a group connected with the Indian Motorcycles that had targeted Chiefland as a place to hold one their rallies – known as an Indian Pow Wow, while celebrating the Native American heritage of the Chiefland area.

“They had already chosen a location for the event,” Strange said, “and applied for permits, and reserved hotel rooms in the city. They chose to relocate this two-day event when they realized the alcohol restrictions on Sunday.”

Not only is lost tourism revenue a result of the Sunday ban on alcohol sales, he said.

The people of Chiefland find fewer options for that weekend day in the city as a result.

There would be more employment with alcohol sales on Sundays too, he said.

He would hire two part-time workers if he was able to sell alcohol on Sundays as he is able to sell on the other six days of the week, Strange said.

Strange said that he hopes the City Commission will consider in the near future amending its ordinance in regard to the Sunday alcohol sales ban.

Brad Groom, a Levy County resident, said he knows Strange well. This business owner sponsors fundraisers at the billiards hall, Groom said, as he mentioned one planned for the future to help in the fight against breast cancer.

McCullar asked Police Chief Scott Anderson if the Chiefland Police Department works on weekends. The chief explained that the CPD is active 24-hour-a-day every single day.

McCullar said she remains in opposition to the sale of alcoholic beverages in the city limits of Chiefland. She does not see this as a solution to improve the local challenges to the city’s budget or the area’s economy.

This ban on alcohol sales in Chiefland on Sunday, McCullar said, is among the things that makes many people proud to live here.

Vice Mayor Jones responded to McCullar.

Jones said there is a misconception that not selling alcohol on Sundays makes a positive difference.

# HardisonInk.com

---

The two relatively large RV parks and resorts under construction in the city limits are not going to generate clientele that are “hell-raisers.”

Vice Mayor Jones said he wants to see growth of business in the city and revising this ordinance to be more competitive with neighboring municipalities in this regard is a good idea.

On Sundays, he added, the drug addicts are not choosing to not sell cocaine or methamphetamine, because there is state law to prevent that every day – not just a municipal ordinance imposed on Sundays.

Jones said law enforcement officers in Chiefland are keeping the drug problem in check.

If the ordinance changed, Vice Mayor Jones said he does not see that as causing an added law enforcement issue. He sees Chiefland is holding itself back by keeping the door closed for business interests that might locate here, except for the Sunday alcohol sales issue.

VFW Post 5625 relocated to be outside the city limits as a result of the ban on Sunday sales. Beef ‘O’ Brady’s built outside the city limits for the same reason.

Mayor Walker said the city needs more business interests to locate within the city limits to help build a larger tax base.

Walker said the city has become a training ground for novice police officers, firefighters and utility service workers. After they become more skilled, they leave Chiefland, Walker said, because the city cannot increase their pay. This budget issue results from stagnation in business growth, she said.

She again brought up the fact that there are eight Internet cafés in the city limits. While the state had created a law to stop this form of gambling, lawyers for that group of business owners overcame the hurdles of statutes.

Those businesses are wide open on Easter Sunday, and every Sunday, she said.

“And I don’t see a bunch of people complaining about that (gambling on Sunday in the city limits),” Walker said.

Mayor Walker said she wants more business to locate in Chiefland.

“I’ve been here 72 years,” Walker said, “and I have seen a new business here in 15 to 20 years come into Chiefland.”

Vice Mayor Jones said he has visited Chiefland Billiards. He mentioned fundraisers held there, and as a place to enjoy oneself, he finds this to be a very good business.

Mayor Walker said she would like to see more stores to add to the mix of Winn-Dixie, Walmart and Save-A-Lot.

McCullar said she thinks Christians in the community will vote against any person who seeks to allow alcoholic beverage sales to occur in Chiefland on Sundays.

The subject of alcoholic beverage sales on Sunday in relation to Christian beliefs is relatively complicated. To discover what the Scripture actually says on the matter cannot be ascertained in a cursory approach.

Registered voters in Chiefland will have the choice between two candidates who sit on opposite sides of the alcoholic beverage sales ban. That vote is Aug. 7, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.