

**CITY OF GREEN RIVER
TOWN HALL MEETING PROCEEDINGS
JULY 27, 2010**

The Governing Body of the City of Green River met in a special workshop session at 6:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. Council Member Rust called the meeting to order. The following Council Members were present: Pete Rust, Jim Boan, Carl Morck and Lisa Maes. The following were present representing the City: City Administrator Barry Cook, Chief of Police John Love, Police Lt. Chris Steffen, Parks and Recreation Supervisor Brenda Roosa, Municipal Judge Jason Petri, City Prosecutor Lisa Botham, and Public Information Coordinator Stephen Pyles. County Attorney Brett Johnson was also present.

Several Retail Liquor License holders were also present, along with members of the Flaming Gorge Days Committee and other special event committee members.

Introduction

Council Member Rust stated he is part of a group called the Sweetwater County Prevention Advisory Council. The purpose of the meeting is to initiate a frank discussion on whether there is a problem with underage drinking in Green River, and if there is, what we choose to do about it.

Presentations

Erin Barbuto, Prevention Specialist with Southwest Counseling Service, stated their focus is on how to prevent harm with the miss use of alcohol by an act that is illegal, or puts someone else at high risk of harm.

She introduced Mike Vercauteren and Rick Lindsey with the Wyoming Prevention Technical Assistance Consortium.

Rick Lindsey stated they are on contract with the Wyoming Department of Health and Substance Abuse Division. They offer technical assistance to help communities that are trying to reduce underage drinking and adult binge drinking. Their presentation focuses on what prevention means on the community level, the options they have and how they help communities find those options.

Mr. Vercauteren's presentation focused on the following:

- History of Prevention

What was used in the past, scientific studies on alcohol and drug use, and risk factors that show school and home programs have worked to reduce the likelihood of kids entering into the use of drugs or alcohol. Continued research has shown that it isn't just the families and schools, but community norms also have a factor.

- CDC's Public Health Model

- Host – the person that is miss using alcohol
- Agent – alcohol or drug itself
- Environment – what is making it easy for alcohol and drugs to connect with the young person

- Prevention Research

Research is saying we need to take a look at the big picture, a comprehensive approach, not only do we need to work with the families, and the kids at school, we need to take a close look at what our community is providing. What kind of norms are in our community that promote the miss use of alcohol, or encourage young people to binge drink. The research should look at whether the youth are getting their alcohol through retail availability or social availability. They also need to look at the criminal justice system (do you have victim impact panels or

drug courts), and how alcohol is promoted in the community – happy hours, advertising near schools. What are the communities telling their kids about alcohol use – a parade where people are drinking on the floats, public drinking that indicates that is the way to have fun as an adult.

Mr. Lindsey continued the presentation, and noted they were bound by a federal grant to only talk about environmentally evidence based strategies. They couldn't talk about anything that hadn't been researched or data driven that didn't show if you use the strategies it will change the needle in terms of reducing underage drinking.

- Evidence-based Strategies (the “blue print”) – what research has shown to be effective in changing the community environment.

Everything on the blue print works, it helps a community see what they can do, policy wise, to bring change in a community, what is workable, what is tolerable, what people will accept. So, it's a matter of making a decision to change things in the community.

- Retail Availability Changes – mandatory responsible beverage service training, compliance checks, restrict outlet density, happy hour restrictions, warning signs posted at retail establishments.
 - Criminal Justice – making it more effective which can mean youth courts, drug courts, victim impact panels, effective DUI campaigns, zero tolerance laws, and youth diversion programs.
 - Community Norms – alcohol restrictions at community events: a separate area like a beer garden where adults drink, wrist bands, use of different cups for alcohol and non-alcohol beverages.
 - Social Availability – use of the Wyoming social host liability law, party patrols, create anti-DUI campaign—create a perceived risk that if you drink and drive you will get caught.
 - Promotion
- Strategic Prevention Framework
 - Needs Assessment – hard core data that exists in terms of what is happening in terms of alcohol in any community, to find out what the causal areas are that are causing the biggest problems in the community.
 - Capacity – means you have people who care about the issue and are willing to do stuff. You have a coalition, members of city council, law enforcement people, and people from school boards. The more people that are willing, the greater the capacity to get something done.
 - Planning – Mr. Lindsey and Mr. Vercauteren can come in and help after the community has done the needs assessment and has the people who are willing to do the work. They help the community look at all the possibilities from the blue print. They facilitate the discussions on all the possible options the community has, and then narrow's them down to what the community thinks is do able.
 - Implementation – they set down with a calendar and decide what needs to be done when, so there is an informed plan to get the final result.
 - Evaluation – need to know if it worked or not.

Research is showing the more environmental strategies that can be implemented in a community, the more impact it has.

Discussion

Council Member Rust stated the discussion is about eliminating excessive drinking that causes harm to others and eliminating underage drinking. It is not about implementing ordinances, or restricting bars. It is identifying whether we have a problem that is affecting our kids first and foremost and what we can do about it.

Responding to a request from Council Member Boan, Chief Love stated they had six juvenile citations during Flaming Gorge Days this year, last year it was fourteen. Out of the twenty arrests all of them were adults. He believes the added security has helped. They had more arrests total, but less of them were underage.

Since October 1, 2009, they had five minors in possession, four contributing to a minor, and forty underage consumptions. They have a pretty aggressive patrol force for DUI's. Statistically, over the last two years, they haven't caught any 15, 16, or 17 year olds, which he thinks is a good thing.

Chief Love noted they do alcohol and tobacco compliance checks which is funded by the Chiefs and Sheriffs Association, twice a year. They have an underage drinking grant which will provide overtime money to spend on extra patrols for the social hosting type events.

County Attorney Brett Johnson feels there is a significant problem with underage drinking parties at houses in Green River, some are hosted by parents. He sees the results, sexual assaults, fighting or aggravated assault and battery, and DUI's. He suggested that parents who are leaving town go to the police department and give them permission to search their house if there is a loud party in the home while they are gone. If an underage person is stopped for drinking and there are other underage people in the car, the parents of those riding in the car should also be notified.

He noted a youth risk behavior survey is given regularly through the schools and the results are frightening. The underage drinkers are not getting the alcohol from the bars; they are getting it from their parents, or friends. The county court system has implemented youth diversion programs, and impact panels. They are working, but they need to do a lot more.

Michelle Marshall with the Ponderosa Bar stated the local retailers use the TIPS training. She noted the taxi service in Green River is very slow, and recommended the "Dad Rides" program be implemented again, or to get some kind of taxi service that could help to prevent DUI's.

Tom Nomis with the Red Feather feels things are as smooth as they can be with the laws that are in place. He doesn't have the problems with drunks that he used to have. He doesn't know how they are going to stop someone who is twenty-one from purchasing beer and then giving it to someone who is underage. He feels the bigger problem is the illegal drugs and they are all over the place.

Dave Johnson, from the Flaming Gorge Days Security Committee, stated they have been trying to get a handle from square one on underage drinking. They had extra security this year. He had the security randomly I.D. people whether they were banded or not. If the security saw a potential problem they dealt with it right away, and handed people over to the local police department. The committee will continue to move forward with the same in the future.

Chris Ortega with the Red Feather feels the bar owners do what they can, but she believes it starts at home, so maybe a meeting with parents would be a better place to start.

Council Member Rust stated he had expected a bunch of concerned parents to show up to the meeting because of the things that have been going on in the schools. He didn't expect a bunch of folks who make their living in bars. He thinks the wrong message got out. The bar owners were invited because we need their input, because they have a unique perspective that could help.

Barbara Loucks from the Embassy stated they showed up because they received a letter that left them with the impression Green River was going to follow the path of Rock Springs with the police department being able to come in and do checks. She doesn't think they need any more laws or rules to adhere to. They do a real good job of governing and monitoring themselves. She doesn't believe Green River has an underage drinking problem, but if they want to address the issue they need to start at home.

Council Member Rust stated this is the complete opposite of following Rock Springs. He had expected to see school district people, school counselors, D.A.R.E. officers, representatives from the court system, juvenile probation, and the medical profession that do believe there is a problem. Without the people who deal with underage drinking or the harm done by excessive

adult drinking on a daily basis, we don't know if there is a problem. He feels a town hall meeting is a discussion with all of the members of the community. Clearly the home and school are the environments that needed to be represented, and they aren't here.

Ms. Loucks feels they need to address some problems they are having with a local business license holder, and to get the Dad Rides back.

Council Member Boan stated the notification wasn't limited to liquor retailers. It went out to schools, parents, social service people, and several others. He is disappointed there weren't parents and people from the schools present. The meeting wasn't about regulating the bars, the problems isn't about the retailers, though he appreciates their coming and their input. He doesn't know how to get people to come to a meeting if they aren't interested. The council is doing everything they can to find out if we have a problem, and if we do how to address it.

Council Member Maes stated she agreed with Ms. Marshall and Ms. Loucks on getting the Dad Rides again. It was a great thing that allowed people to leave their car and get home safely. She believes kids are going to drink no matter what, and it is up to the parents to know where their kids are and who their friends are.

Council Member Rust noted two years ago there was a meeting held at Southwest Counseling, and at that time, every single person that is on the email list for the notification of the this meeting were at that meeting. The point of the meeting was Sweetwater County, Rock Springs and Green River is leading the nation, relative to our size, in a number of statistics that are not statistics that we as parents should be proud of. A key point was if somebody doesn't do something about it, nothing will happen.

Council Member Morck asked how we could get people to come. Ignoring something doesn't make it go away. How are they going to get them to think about it and come out and discuss it?

Jeff Stout with the Wild Horse Saloon and Club 86 stated, with all due respect, that a couple of years ago the smoking ordinance got passed when they didn't show up. So, the council will start seeing them at town meetings especially if it has to do with alcohol.

Teresa Wire, a nurse from Community Nursing, stated she does home visits and one of the common questions she gets from women that are under twenty one, is, "how long do I have to stop breast feeding if I go out and have drinks with my friends?" She gave another example of a fifteen year old who had walked drunk all the way from Jamestown to her home, to see her nephew, and passed out in her back yard. The parents were upset because she called 911 and the ambulance. These types of incidents are what brought her to the prevention advisory council.

Brett Johnson noted Sweetwater County is one of the highest in the nation for teen pregnancies, suicide, and underage drinking. We have an unbelievable drug problem. To answer Council Morck's question, some young person dies, and then somebody decides to do something about underage drinking. The problem is the kids are dying but nobody is doing anything about it. He suggested the youth risk survey be posted on the city website, so people could get an idea of how huge the problem is in Green River. It is turning kids lives into lives of misery, of crime, of addiction, broken marriages, aggravated assault and battery, rape and everything else the courts deal with on the other end. There are no easy answers.

Council Member Boan noted the community has to admit we have a problem with undisputable information from the experts. If the professionals would have shown up and said we have a problem and why, it would have been the headline in the newspaper tomorrow morning. He believes we have a problem and that is why he attended the meeting. He doesn't know what the source of the problem is. He relies on the experts to give him that information. Without it he can't make a decision on what to do.

Council Member Morck felt each individual has a responsibility to chip away at the problem when they see it, and to converse to whomever it may be relevant to.

Laura Pizzato-Schmitt with Southwest Counseling noted there were some experts in the audience, as far as prevention and the techniques were concerned, with Mr. Vercauteren and Mr. Lindsey. She can't stress enough that if we can tap into the expertise of people who really know

what they are doing, and do it right, we are going to get something done for the better of our communities. The other player that we are missing here are the kids. Ask any of the teenagers what is really going on at the high school, at the junior high, at the middle school, and they will tell you when it starts. They will tell how they do the drugs at school, what bottles are better for putting alcohol in so you don't get caught, and tell you they drink in front of their teachers. There are all kinds of stories the kids will tell us if we want to listen. They are the ones with the wealth of information. They are also going to tell you it is not just about alcohol, and cigarettes, it's oxycontin, all the other benzos, and all the drugs they have ready access to in their own homes in the medicine cabinet. Her twelve year old daughter will tell you that kids in Rock Springs are already having sex, drinking, and doing meth.

She doesn't have the solution for all of this. She knows that there is a problem. she sees it every day in her job. There are parents, who are doing every single thing they can, and their kids still have problems, and there are parents who really don't do anything. She, as a community member, feels she has to step up for the kids that don't have parents that will step up. So, there is a ton of responsibility, a ton of problems and there are some solutions. She appreciates the meeting tonight, and feels there is a problem and they need to come back together again and come up with some solutions.

Council Member Rust stated they would have another meeting, this is just a beginning. He appreciated everyone who took the time to come to the meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

H. Castillon, Mayor

ATTEST:

Jeffrey V. Nieters, City Clerk