

Falls City Council Denies SUNMART Liquor License Application.

(KLZA) -- Falls City Council members voted 5-3 against a proposal to give favorable comment to a liquor license request to the SUNMART grocery store at 1900 Harlan Street Monday night.

Councilman Don Ferguson made the motion to give favorable comment to the request, Jim Wisdom made the second to the motion. They were joined by Council member Steve Scholl in voting yes.

Casting "nay" votes were Council members Kirby Robidoux, Angie Nolte, Jerry Oliver, Mike Dougherty and Judy Murphy.

Prior to the vote local SUNMART Manager Martin Leon and Tom Dickman with the parent company provided information on the company plans. Dickman said liquor sales would offer more convenience for the public and will help the business with sales. Dickman noted the company has been and wants to continue to be a good community supporter donating about \$10,000 annually to schools and has donated to many other projects through the years.

Teresa Armbruster, manager of the Spirit Shoppe Liquor Store spoke during the public hearing noting there are already four businesses with liquor licenses selling to a limited customer base. She said there is not a need for more alcohol sales in the community. SUNMART Manager Martin Leon noted the grocery store serves a much larger area than just Falls City.

Also discussed was the stipulation that alcohol sales are not allowed within a certain distance of a church and SUNMART has two churches within that distance as neighbors. Leon questioned the purpose of such a rule when there is currently less than 160 feet between a liquor store and an elementary school in the community.

Council member Don Ferguson made several points in favor of the license being issued including free enterprise and that the sales would generate sales tax which aids the city.

The final decision will rest with the State Liquor Commission and they are expected to hold a public hearing on the application in the next couple of weeks.

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