

Council votes down business license exemption for all entertainers

‘Temporary’ entertainers exempt; ‘temporary’ left undefined

BY GRANT GERSTNER
EDITOR

LA GRANGE — An ordinance that would have exempted all entertainers, “temporary” or not, from business license requirements when performing within licensed establishments failed to pass at the Aug. 4 La Grange City Council meeting despite local entertainers’ complaints.

As previously reported, the council approved an ordinance in June that exempted entertainers who “provid[e] temporary entertainment services ... in public settings or in a licensed establishment” from being required to pay the business license tax and temporary vendor fees when performing within the city limits.

When it was passed, the word “temporary” was not explicitly defined in the ordinance.

In May, another ordinance was brought before the council amending the previously approved ordinance — simply removing the word “temporary.” Its intent was to “clarify that the temporal nature of the entertainment is irrelevant” and let all entertainers perform “in public settings or in a licensed establishment” without having to pay the licensing tax or vendor fees.

When the amendment came before the council on Aug. 4, however, opinions were divided.

City Attorney Beach Craigmyle introduced the amendment, saying that the exemption was based “on the theory that they [entertainers] are good for economic development” and that the change was spurred by a question about the definition of “temporary.”

“In other sections of the code, the word temporary is implied to mean 30 days or more — that’s not the intention of this ordi-

nance,” Craigmyle said.

During the public hearing, local karaoke DJ Brian Rea told the council that “Entertainers like me are not independent businesses.

“We’re hired by bars, restaurants and venues that are already fully licensed. Requiring performers to also carry a business license is redundant and, frankly, it penalizes those of us doing small, part-time gigs ... A flat license fee can take a big bite out of our modest earnings, especially for young or just starting artists.

“This kind of rule discourages local talent and hurts venues that rely on live entertainment and draws customers ... When people go out for karaoke, they don’t just sing, they support small businesses. If regulation is needed, it makes more sense to work with the licensed venues, not the performers they book.”

After the public hearing, Councilor Kenneth Powell shared his dissent: “If you’re getting paid, you’re running a business ... if we’re going to have a temporary entertainment, then we need to set a temporary amount of times that they can do that.

“If not, then you’re going to have a temporary entertainer coming every other day, once a week, twice a month, whatever — and that could accumulate a lot of money that is generated into a small business ...”

Powell also asked how much licensing costs and was told it is \$55.

“I think if you’re doing anything for entertainment or if you’re doing anything for a business, \$55 a year — I don’t think that’s going to break the bank,” Powell continued.

Some councilors disagreed with Powell. “There are people who have businesses and that run busi-

nesses and they hire these people to come and entertain their guests, so they’re basically employees of the people that they’re working for ...” said Councilor Lucy Ricketts.

Councilor Laura Taylor added that “these are people that are providing services within a business that already has a business license, so you’re double dipping if you ask these individuals to pay a business license over on top of that ...

“What about those people that are just starting off, that are struggling, that are new to entertaining? You’re dissuading them from coming to our city and providing services. You’re dissuading people from coming from Louisville or J-town or Lexington ... that could come and generate money in our city.”

“If you run a business and you’re making money, that’s \$55. If you can’t afford the \$55, you need to find another business or a hobby,” Powell replied.

Councilor Joe Davenport asked if the exemption would apply to bands that play for the monthly Trackside Tunes event or other city-sponsored events.

“The bands that we hire have business licenses,” answered La Grange Tourism Director Donna Sabo. “Anyone I hire has a license — the balloon artist has a license.”

Upon taking a vote, the amendment failed to pass with only two votes in favor from councilors Laura Taylor and Jason Taylor — Councilor Jason Kinser abstaining.

No discussion followed regarding how to define “temporary,” leaving enforcing the ordinance subjective.

In other news, the council unanimously approved an ordinance that will allow the city to alter health insurance rates for its employees on an annual basis rather than being forced into a set 90% from the city and 10% from the

employees, as it has been historically.

“We decided that it’s not proper financial procedure ... [and] it’s almost impossible for the city to lock in on a guaranteed percentage of anything not knowing what health rates are doing in today’s market,” Black explained.

Questions arose regarding what the new rate would be and if it would result in what would seem like a pay cut to city employees.

Human Resources Director Katie Bechtold explained that the city has been waiting to hear back from its brokers to determine if the rates would change, likely to happen in the next week, and that they would not go into effect until Oct. 1. New rates would also be discussed by the personnel and budget committees before being brought to the council, likely in September.

The ordinance also repeals all prior ordinances regarding personnel policies prior to the adoption of last year’s employee handbook to make the personnel policies more simply defined and adaptable.

In a five to two vote, the council also reappointed Encompass Development, Design & Construct Founder and President John Stewart to the Oldham-La Grange Development Authority (OLDA) Board, which presides over the city and county’s shared development Oldham Reserve.

Laura Taylor and Jason Taylor cited Stewart’s decision to not support a moratorium on data centers within Oldham Reserve as reasoning for voting against his reappointment and Kinser abstained.

The council also conducted a first reading for their annual ad valorem tax rates of 19.1% for business properties and 26.5% for personal properties as well as approved a municipal order amending personnel

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TRIAL

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voluntary and provides cost-effective justice.”

A plea agreement is a possible outcome from felony mediation. If no agreement is reached, the case will be returned to the court’s active docket. Though felony mediation is not open to the public, any changes to Cornett’s case will be included in an upcoming edition.

Cornett’s co-defendant, Zoe Wolfe — who is charged with tampering with physical evidence — has a pretrial conference scheduled for Sept. 4, 2025, at 1 p.m.

Frohlich has also been requested to conduct felony mediation for Wolfe, who does not have a trial date set, according to court documents.

As previously reported, the court heard and subsequently denied Cornett’s requests to reduce his bond amount, lower

his murder charge and post bond in the form of a property lien after a near three-hour adversarial bond hearing April 23.

During the hearing, Commonwealth Attorney Courtney Baxter brought Oldham County Police Detective Alex Sattich before the court.

Sattich presented certain evidence gathered thus far surrounding the case, including video surveillance of Preble being struck by a truck from afar; receipts and surveillance photos showing Cornett drinking at restaurants prior to the approximate incident time; and a note allegedly written by Cornett to Wolfe with an alibi statement.

Despite the court’s denial of his requests, court documents show that “Justin Cornett” filed an appeal of the denial of “posting a real property bond” with the Kentucky Court of Appeals. Records do not show that any action has been taken on the appeal as of July 29.

COURT

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Otterback, expiring Jan. 17, 2028. Tapp is the Executive Director of Crossroads Pregnancy and the Secretary and Treasurer of the Oldham Chamber and Economic Development Board of Directors.

The appointment of Charles “Skip” Miller to the Planning Commission to fulfill the unexpired term of Rollo Fox, expiring Sept. 5, 2027.

The court also went into executive session, citing the Open Meetings Act exception regarding “deliberations on the future acquisition or sale of real property by a public agency.” Oldham Circuit Court Master Commissioner Valerie Lammlein Shannon was invited into the session.

Upon returning from executive session, Magistrate Kevin Woosley made a motion to authorize Voegelé “to make an offer to buy an undis-

closed piece of property.” The motion passed unanimously.

During the announcement portion of the meeting, Voegelé shared that Oldham County Emergency Management recently received an award as “the Most Improved agency in Kentucky ... from Kentucky’s Emergency Management Association,” he said, congratulating Oldham County Emergency Management Director Zack Wilt.

Voegelé also announced that a name for the new community center, the renovated former Methodist church next to the fiscal court building, has been decided by community vote: “Chapel 1888.”

A sign with the new name will be erected in front of the building, he said, and the space will be available for rent through Oldham County Parks and Recreation.

The next Oldham County Fiscal Court meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 19, at 2 p.m.

POLICY

FROM PAGE A1

lunch and in between every single class, but they cannot come out during instructional time,’ and it works.

“It’s been effective ... because we push on it, we purge, we do everything we can; but if there’s a board policy behind that, I can really make sure the teachers are consistently enforcing that rule ... everybody agrees that the cellphones during class time are a huge negative ...

“I would hate to see this kind of evolve into something that is unrealistic to enforce. That’s my fear.”

“I have classes here where a kid wants to get out their cellphone and take a picture of what they were doing today in biomedical science,” said Arvin Education Center Principal Matt Watkins. “I would love to share 1,400 kids’ experiences in the day at Arvin — that’s really important to do ...

“On the other end of it, we’re raising ... young people who are getting ready to enter society and we need to teach them responsibility of ‘this is when it’s appropriate, this is when it’s not.’”

“We have high school kids who have jobs,” Brown added, “[they] may receive a message about their job or different things that they can responsibly check their phone in between classes without being an issue.”

Watkins further expressed a concern with kids who participate in internships, field trips or other programs that take them off of school campus. “I’m not going to have

that ability to connect with that kid to know that they arrived where they’re supposed to, what questions they have, what needs they have.”

“The relationships we have with kids as administrators are powerful,” said South Oldham High School Principal Melissa Woosley. “Do we want those to be negative in our halls? As we engage with them in the lunchroom? Because that’s what it’s going to be ...

“I’ve been there in this district under some policy in my own high school that we changed because we wanted to change the culture and the climate and teach kids responsible use and appropriate behaviors. That’s what we’re supposed to do ...

“Do we want these kids to be able to trust us or do we want them to see us as the cellphone police?”

Woosley also mentioned the time it takes to discipline each student, referencing how many may have to be disciplined if the policy included hall breaks and lunch time.

When Board Chair Carly Clem asked for the principals’ thoughts on allowing phones during hall breaks but not during lunch time, Brown answered that “it’s not enforceable ... What they’re going to learn is: be sneaky, don’t talk to us.”

Watkins added that having to discipline students for using their phones during lunch or hall breaks could make them miss portions of class time — counterintuitive to the intent of the policy in protecting instructional time.

Board member Allison Sheffer asked the principals if they thought the consequences would be a sufficient deterrent. Sullivan answered that he



Photo by Grant Gerstner

Pictured, from left, are Oldham County Schools principles Rush Sullivan, Natalie Brown, Melissa Woosley, Beth Carter and Matt Watkins.

wholeheartedly believes consequences are a deterrent for a majority of students.

“For some of our student body, they’re going to push the issue on a regular basis,” he said.

“Are we going to have people that do stuff that they’re not supposed to do? We’re going to have it regardless of our policy because ... we’re dealing with young people making bad decisions [but those are] small numbers,” said Woosley.

Sullivan further brought up concerns with some of the consequences. “When we kept cellphones until the end of the day and made parents come to get them, we had parents who do not have transportation and their students take the bus home. So they just couldn’t come get them.

“We had students whose parents were out of town on business trips — that was six years ago, seven years ago — and now the majority of homes ... in the district probably don’t have a landline ... now we’re sending a kid who drives home without a cellphone. We’re sending a kid home on a bus who might spend three hours before their parent gets home and if there’s a medical emergency or any kind of emergency, they don’t have the

opportunity [to call for help].”

Buckner High School Principal Beth Carter also mentioned that she likely doesn’t have enough space to hold students sent to Buckner High School through Oldham County Alternative to Suspension (OCATS) and would likely have to delay a students’ OCATS punishment weeks after they actually broke the policy.

Sullivan also warned that regular suspension “isn’t necessarily the punishment that we think it is for some students ... some of them will say, ‘can’t you just suspend me instead of sending me to OCATS?’”

“If the goal of the cellphone policy is to protect instructional time, I have significant concerns about suspending a kid for an entire day.”

Sheffer mentioned the possibility of doing other forms of in-school suspension, but Woosley countered that she, for one, likely doesn’t have the space or the faculty to do so.

“This policy is actually stricter than a vape being taken off of a kid,” Woosley later added.

“We want to do what you’re asking us to do as far as protecting instructional time and holding the kids accountable, and we find that this could be

a great opportunity for us to partner as a whole county and say we’re all in agreement,” Watkins said. “We’re not asking for unfettered use of cellphones.”

In a five to one vote — Sheffer opposed — the board agreed to make the following changes to the policy:

- To allow student to use their devices during breaks between classes and during lunch
- To allow cellphone usage in the classroom if approved by an administrator, not a teacher
- To release a device held by administrators to the student at the end of the day, rather than forcing a parent or guardian to come to the school to get the device.
- Adding an exemption to the policy for any device a student is authorized to use pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The policy, approved at a special-called meeting on Aug. 8, states that “personal devices must be completely silenced and out of sight. Students may keep devices in their bag, back-

pack, purse, etc.”

The disciplinary actions are defined as follows:

- First offense: student referral, parent phone call and confiscation of the device to be returned to the student or the student’s parent or guardian at the end of the school day.
- Second offense: attendance at the next-scheduled detention and the first-offense consequences.
- Third offense: One day of in-school suspension, either OCATS or on-site, along with the second-offense consequences.
- Additional offenses: Third offense consequences and potential suspension at the discretion of the district.

The policy also states that parents and guardians can retrieve forfeited student devices during regular office hours and that students are responsible for their devices — the district “shall not be responsible for the loss, theft, or destruction of devices brought onto school property.”

The next Oldham County Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Aug. 25 at 4:45 p.m.

OLDHAM COUNTY’S DAV CHAPTER 173

RIDE FOR THE REASON

2ND ANNUAL MOTORCYCLE RUN

CUSTOM CARS WELCOME

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11TH

RAIN DATE, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18TH

Donations: \$25/\$30

Registration discounted with an onsite pet supply donation to the OC Humane Society

VETERAN’S MEMORIAL PARK, CRESTWOOD, KY

REGISTRATION 9:30 AM / DEPART 11 AM

RIDE ENDS AT BULLY BARBEQUE, GOSHEN

FOOD AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE 50/50 RAFFLE

POKER HANDS / SILENT AUCTION

All Proceeds Benefit Veterans, Their Families and OC Humane Society

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