



Blair Ridge Dental

Dr. J.J. Heying



1700 Blairs Ferry Rd., Hiawatha, IA (319) 396-3596 www.blairridgedental.com

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Headlines

## [IC alcohol committee discusses possible “end runs” around 21-ordinance](#)

by [Diane Heldt](#) :: UPDATED: 17 December 2010 | 2:48 pm :: in [Local News](#) :: [5 Comments](#)

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Some bar owners may be looking for “end runs” around the city’s 21-only ordinance, such as establishing private clubs that allow patrons to bring their own drinks, a few downtown business owners said Friday.

Several business owners said during Friday’s Partnership for Alcohol Safety meeting they’ve heard rumblings among bar owners about bring-your-own-bottle private clubs and bars adding kitchens to meet the 50 percent from food rule in the wake of voters in November upholding the city ordinance that keeps people younger than 21 out of bars after 10 p.m.

“We’ve built this mousetrap, but we’ve also created a more innovative, creative mouse,” Mark Ginsberg, committee member and president of Iowa City jeweler M.C. Ginsberg, said. “This is a paradigm shift, but it is out there developing.”

Along with the bring-your-own-bottle private club idea she’s heard from owners of some larger bars, Leah Cohen said she’s also heard that some bars may add food offerings, in an attempt to have more than 50

percent of sales from food, which exempts a business from the ordinance.

“It’s just what I’ve heard,” Cohen, who owns Bo-James restaurant and bar, said. “So people around this table know what’s being talked about.”

At such bring-your-own venues, patrons can bring beer and wine but no hard liquor, officials from Iowa’s Alcoholic Beverages Division said during the meeting. Such clubs do not need a liquor license. Des Moines and Davenport both have similar after-hours clubs, Judy Seib, special projects coordinator with the Alcoholic Beverages Division, said.

Staff from Iowa’s Alcoholic Beverages Division, including new director Stephen Larson, were at the meeting. The Partnership for Alcohol Safety is a group of University of Iowa, city and business leaders working to reduce dangerous drinking habits downtown.

Larson said the Alcoholic Beverages Division wants to work cooperatively with Iowa City officials and community leaders to help them achieve the results they want to see at the local level. Larson talked about forming partnerships “in regards to things that are important to you.”

“We want to assist in education, we want to assist in outreach. We want to be involved,” Larson said. “This is just the first step with this department to be engaged more in Iowa City.”

Committee members said they realize there may be disagreements among them about the best courses of action to reach the goals. Tom Rocklin, UI vice president for student services, said he heard from many committee members recently after he said UI officials had not ruled out adding a pub to the under-renovation Iowa Memorial Union.

Rocklin said while the idea of a bar in the Memorial Union has not been ruled out, it’s a long way from reality. The final details of what exactly will go in the revamped Iowa Memorial Union, which was damaged in the 2008 flood, are 20 or 30 months from being decided, he said.

“Given what I heard, I’m going to take that seriously into consideration,” Rocklin said of the feedback on the bar idea. “I did hear you.”

About 25 members of the group met Friday. They plan to hold a summit in January to discuss goals and actions.

IC alcohol committee discusses possible “end runs” around 21-ordinance



1.

[Will Shotfeel](#) said: On [December 17, 2010](#)

I was wondering how long it would be before bars started doing the equivalent of giving free drinks with the purchase of a bag of popcorn. 100% income from popcorn sales, zero from alcohol.

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[Rupert Jones](#) said: On [December 17, 2010](#)

Well, they wouldn’t be doing that at all based on anything in this article.

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