

# Grand Forks City Council passes alcohol ordinance banning 'extreme drink specials'

By [Sarah Volpenhein](#) on Apr 20, 2015 at 10:05 p.m.

After a last-minute amendment, three-for-one drink deals and drinking games will be allowed to go on under an alcohol ordinance passed at the Grand Forks City Council meeting Monday evening.

The council passed the alcohol ordinance, which restricts "extreme drink specials," and another prohibiting providing an environment for underage guests to drink alcohol.

The former would have outlawed three drink deals — unlimited drinks for a fixed price or no cost, three-for-one drink specials and games or contests focused on alcohol consumption — but a watered-down version passed Monday.

The approved ordinance only outlaws all-you-can-drink specials, though there are exceptions that include beer and wine tastings and private events such as weddings and fundraisers.

Council member Terry Bjerke was the only council member to vote against the ordinance, which passed 6-1, saying it had effectively been "gutted" by taking out the provisions outlawing the three-for-one drinks and games or contests focused on alcohol consumption.

Four council members voted Monday in favor of removing those provisions from the ordinance: Doug Christensen, Jeannie Mock, Dana Sande and Crystal Schneider.

## Changing culture

The social host ordinance, which holds party hosts accountable for underage drinkers, passed 5-2 with council members Christensen and Sande dissenting.

Sande expressed ambivalence toward the ordinance.

"I had intended on moving to table this," he said Monday. "But in light of several circumstances on campus and in the city I'm not going to table this."

Sande said he was still unsure who the intended target of the ordinance was, whether college students or high school students, and was also still concerned the ordinance was duplicative of existing city and state code.

"It seems to be more wrapped around the emotions of the University of North Dakota," he said.

City Attorney Howard Swanson said the ordinance is aimed at people ages 18 to 20, saying there is no state law addressing providing alcohol to people ages 18 and 20

Council member Terry Bjerke did not see what was so controversial about the ordinance.

In response to critics who may ask whether they are expected to check ID's at the door to their home, Bjerke said, "Yes, card them when they come into your house. Man up. Woman up."

Council member Bret Weber said the social host ordinance is meant to challenge the culture of underage drinking.

"This is a policy decision intended to affect culture, and that's always a tricky balance," he said. "It won't in and of itself change culture."

Anyone found in violation of the ordinance would be charged with a non-criminal offense in municipal court.

## Reducing consumption

The two alcohol ordinances were proposed earlier this year by the Community and Campus Committee to Reduce High-Risk Alcohol Use, a partnership between the city and UND, and sparked community debate.

The council spent three hours debating and taking public commentary on the ordinances at a meeting earlier this month.

Sharon Wilsnack, a committee member who spoke Monday, argued the restrictions put in place by the ordinances have been shown to reduce high-risk alcohol consumption.

More than 20 states have implemented restrictions on all-you-can-drink specials, she said.

She also addressed questions some residents have raised, noting the ordinance would not apply to civic events like the Art and Wine Walk.

But Marcus Wax, a UND alumnus, argued the ordinances miss the mark.

"I see it as attacking a secondary cause," he said. "It doesn't attack the proximate cause."

He suggested the council attack overconsumption and binge drinking by improving bartender training, tackling the stigma associated with alcoholism and providing infrastructure to treat chemical dependency.

Wax also expressed concern with the lack of local data on "extreme drink specials."

While the committee compiled statistics and research data from national sources, he said, there was little to no research done on the local level.

"Without collecting this evidence ahead of time, we won't know whether this is effective," he said.

Do you think "extreme drink specials" should be allowed in Grand Forks?

- No
- Maybe
- Yes

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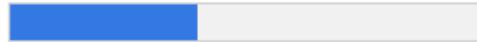
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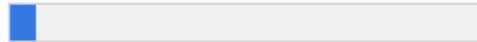
Yes 53.88% (493 votes)



No 40.22% (368 votes)



Maybe 5.9% (54 votes)



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