

# Council passes ordinance to curb underage drinking at parties



**Erik Pague**  
**Reporter**

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Following a presentation from the group People Against Illegal Drugs, Othello city council approved a new ordinance that will attempt to discourage minors from drinking at parties during the July 28 council meeting.

Interim police chief David Rehaume presented the ordinance proposal along with PAID members Vicki Guse and Amaris Garza. Rehaume said the "social host" ordinance would give officers in the Othello Police Department more authority to ticket the person responsible for the property at the time a social gathering involving underage drinking happens at a residence or other location.

"It just gives another tool to law enforcement to respond to such disruptions of community life," Rehaume said.

Garza said the ordinance is only one part of a social, environmental and policy change PAID plans to tackle with an education and advertising campaign paid for in part by \$5,000 in funding from the Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery. She said there would be outreach at Othello schools this year to help both minors and their parents understand the increased risk of underage drinking at parties.

Council did discuss who would ultimately be responsible for paying the \$200 citations this law gives authorities the ability to write, with councilor Corey Everett asking what would happen if minors throw a party unbeknownst to the parents who were out of town at the time. Rehaume said officers would be instructed to determine who is in immediate control of the property in question during the time of the social gathering and would write citations accordingly following an investigation.

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Rehaume also sought and received approval from council authorizing a \$12,000 grant from the state Office of Crime Victims Advocacy to provide officers with extra training to prevent violence against women.

The next portion of the meeting covered various construction projects, including a status update on the city's new well currently being drilled east of State Route 17. Gray and Osborne engineer Larry Julius and GSI Water Solutions geologist Kevin Lindsey said crews have reached a depth of almost 700 feet and that the project is currently under budget by more than \$115,000. Furthermore, Lindsay said Well No. 9 is shaping up to be a solid performer, with good water pressure while, so far at least, avoiding water with high fluoride content that led to some headaches with two other city wells in the past.

Julius also updated council on several projects his company is working on around town, including plans to renovate 14th Avenue from Cemetery Road to Highway 26 is in the design stage but should be ready to go to bid shortly after the new year with construction slated to follow later in 2015. He said a roundabout at Scootney Street and 14th Avenue could be a possibility.

Next, public works department head Terry Clements got the go-ahead from council to sign a three year contract with Utility Service Group to perform renovations to two of the city's water towers beginning with the 3 million gallon tank at Lions Park. The third water tower on 14th Avenue and Ash Street is slated to only receive an inspection in the third year of the contract.

The final project was presented by Parks and Recreation coordinator Molly Klippert, who got approval to begin a \$30,500 contract with Spohn Ranch Skateparks to design a skate park that is hoped to be built in Lions Park. Spohn Ranch would also oversee the construction phase, but Klippert said the city would still need to approve Spohn Ranch's plans and also go out to bid for contractors in the future.