

NITRO COUNCIL BACKTRACKS ON CHANGE TO ZONING ORDINANCE

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A month after a zoning ordinance was presented to **Nitro** City Council that would allow lottery parlors to open up closer to schools, churches and other community centers, council members appear ready to leave distance requirements at what they are now.

Council members could not seem to agree to change the rules for video parlors in the city on Tuesday. The proposal included reducing the required distance between video lottery parlors and schools, churches, playgrounds and other slot parlors from 3,000 feet to 1,000 feet.

The idea has been controversial, with some officials suggesting the move would help businesses and the city's tax base, while others urging that the required distance instead be increased.

Council was set to vote on the ordinance at its Jan. 7 meeting, but the meeting was cancelled due to bad weather.

Councilman Joe Savilla, an outspoken opponent of the video lottery machines, led the discussion Tuesday to keep the 3,000-foot limit.

"I think we should have the ordinance return to the original language and keep the distance at 3,000 feet," he said. "We have to protect our citizens."

Savilla said changing the limit could mean little or no protection from criminal elements.

"I fought six years ago to keep these establishments away from **Nitro** and I haven't changed my mind," he said. "It's worked this way for all that time and I see no reason to cut it (the distance) back."

The original ordinance was adopted in August 2004.

But councilman Bill Javins reminded fellow council members that the city supports video lottery whether big or small. He urged his fellow council members approve the 1,000-foot limit.

He said the move would help the city's tax base as well as add jobs.

"Small businesses run the country," Javins said. "The limits imposed by our neighbors like St. Albans, South Charleston and Charleston are in line with the 1,000-foot limit."

As a member of the ordinance committee, councilman Jim McKay voted against the change. He said, as far as he was concerned, a distance of 5,000-feet would be okay with him.

Marsha Long, an employee of Castaways, a restaurant and tavern on Main Avenue in **Nitro**, said the change in distance would improve their business and pled with council to approve the change.

Council members voted down the ordinance. They will vote on a new version of the ordinance, which will contain language that was adopted in 2004, limiting the distance to 3,000 feet at the Feb. 2 meeting.

In other business, **Nitro** Fire Chief Ernie Hedrick said the department received three new Jaws of Life machines a hydraulic rescue tool which had already been used three times.

Also, **Nitro** Mayor Rusty Casto recommended council members approve a resolution endorsing the 2010 Census.