

# Tyonek fights to rid area of unwanted liquor store

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Liquor is being sold to residents of Tyonek, and the Native village council wants

the sales to stop.

Tyonek traditionally has been a dry community, yet a store selling package liquor was recently licensed by the Al-

cohol Beverage Control Board (ABCB) to operate out of Trading Bay, a short distance to the south of the village. The village government is fighting renewal of that license.

The problem, said Don Standifer, president of the village council, is that most of the liquor being sold is going to residents of Tyonek. The flow of alcohol into the community is causing many hardships, he claims. The store is three miles from the village.

"The emergency medical technicians and the village nurse testified that there has been an increase of alcohol related problems since the establishment of the package liquor store opened," Standifer said in a recent letter to Darryl Schaesermeyer of the Kenai Borough Assembly. Standifer was referring to testimony presented to the ABCB in a hearing held in Tyonek on Feb. 23.

"The school principal also testified he has seen a change in the childrens' attitudes

since the liquor store opened," Standifer continued, "I and many others here in Tyonek have seen a big change in our community... The people around here used to drink alcohol and straighten up for a period of time, and now it seems a lot of people are constantly on alcohol!"

Standifer wrote the letter to seek continued help from the Kenai Borough in protesting the ABCB's approval of the liquor license, held by Trading Bay Catering. The village of Tyonek filed its own official protest, but was told by the ABCB that it did not have any legal standing within the state to file the protest, because the liquor store was located within the boundaries of the borough.

The village is appealing this status in superior court.

Pat Sharrock, director of the ABCB, said a final decision on the licensing had not been made at the last meeting of the board, which was held in Juneau, because requests had been received from both the Kenai Borough, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Ekstrom, proprietors of the Trading Bay establishment, to delay the decision until the board could meet in Anchorage.

Sharrock said the board will weigh the protest filed by the Kenai Borough Assembly to try and determine whether it is "arbitrary, capricious, or unreasonable," before deciding whether the liquor license should be renewed or not.

According to Sharrock, there are three establishments in the area which do sell liquor: the package liquor store at Trading Bay, a restaurant, also run by Trading Bay Catering, which serves alcoholic beverages, and one at a nearby sporting resort.

"There seems to be more of a concern over the

package liquor store operation than the restaurant," Sharrock said.

Standifer noted in his letter that on March 8, the people of Tyonek held a heated general meeting during which they "voted to abandon any and all plans to sell alcohol in or around the village area, and to continue to try and stop the granting of the renewal of Trading Bay Catering's package liquor store license, because of the ill effects it's having on our community."

The Ekstroms had no comment. "I suppose I should refer you to our attorney," Mrs. Ekstrom said when contacted at Trading Bay. The attorney, Natalie Finn of Anchorage, was unavailable.

According to Standifer's letter and the minutes of a February board meeting of the Alaska Native Health Board, it would appear that the Ekstroms are trying to justify the continued licensing of their establishment by claiming it is designed to serve logging contractors working out of Trading Bay, and not the people of Tyonek.

Standifer claimed the contractors would be in violation of their contracts with Tyonek Native Corporation were they to purchase alcoholic beverages and bring them back to their camps.

"We are the majority of the people whom he (Ekstrom) serves," Standifer claimed. "At present, the logging camp is semi-closed and does not intend to open a full-scale operation in the immediate future."

Should the protested license be renewed, Standifer looks for more trouble in the future. "Fifteen miles is a long way to drive when someone is intoxicated and runs off the road," he explained. "Or possibly this summer one of our people might drown in their skiff going down there."