



Letter from Mayor Tom Hoechst on Burlesque Ban

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Recently the news reported that I, as the Mayor, banned Burlesque in Alton. That is not true and I feel the need to set the record straight.

As Mayor, I cannot “ban” anything in Alton. My job is to enforce the ordinances and the laws on the books. The ordinances of the City Council can make certain activities illegal. For nearly 30 years, the ordinances of the City of Alton have banned “lewd entertainment” in establishments serving liquor. For many years, those ordinances were enforced sporadically, but when I became Mayor, I made it clear to the Police Chief that those ordinances would be enforced. Liquor licensees were informed that lewd entertainment or nudity in bars would not be tolerated.

A few weeks ago, videos were forwarded to me of “burlesque” shows that had been conducted in Alton taverns. After reviewing the videos, I called one of our tavern owners who had advertised that he would be conducting a burlesque show. In the presence of the Police Chief and City Attorney, I explained to him that, whatever it may be called, women stripping off their clothes is a violation of our city ordinances. I made it clear that such exhibitions in taverns will not be tolerated by this administration. I also made it clear that shows featuring live music, dancing, comedy, and the like present no problem; only the strippers and the nudity shown in the videos would subject a licensee to prosecution. The tavern owner understood the dilemma and chose to cancel the scheduled burlesque show.

I like to think that I enjoy fun entertainment as much as anyone. However, women or men stripping off their clothes to the point of violating our prohibitions against lewd entertainment, (i.e.: nudity) constitutes a violation of the long established laws in the City of Alton. Whenever we receive a tip that such displays may occur, whether that’s through word-of-mouth, social media, or a traditional media source, the City intends to investigate such allegations. I pledged to clean up Alton and that is what I continue to try to do in my administration.

Sincerely,

Tom Hoechst, Mayor

City of Alton, Illinois