



UPDATE: Last week in business at Bottle and Barrel before city-mandated 15 day closure

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ALTON - Chris Keidel, owner of the Bottle and Barrel, said he has about \$3,000 more to make to meet his goal before a city-mandated 15-day closure of his establishment, located at 554 E. Broadway begins this coming Sunday.

That closure was mandated by the City of Alton following an October incident in which a private birthday party was held at the establishment, which was entirely closed to the general public for the occasion. The incident, which was spread on social media via a Facebook video, contained women with bare breasts dancing in an exotic fashion on the second floor. Keidel said he was not aware of the situation as it was occurring, adding it was also not captured on his surveillance equipment.

In fact, Keidel said the first he heard of any incident happening that evening was when he saw the post on Facebook. He said he watched the first few moments of the video and then stopped after seeing bare breasts exposed. He said the video was shared by someone who believed such behavior objectified women and demanded the city to take immediate action. Keidel then called Alton Mayor Brant Walker to talk about the social media uproar.

Walker said he could not comment on the incident on behalf of the city, but an incident report provided to Riverbender.com from Keidel reflects the social media video, adding there was another allegation of acts of oral sex being committed on the premises, but additional evidence to validate that statement was not provided and has not been provided at this time.

The incident report also described a police response to the Bottle and Barrel in which it is said the Alton Police Department had to disperse a crowd from the sidewalk in front of the establishment past its normal business hours.

"We had a crowd outside after we closed, and I told them to leave," Keidel said. "The police came after everyone had left and I told them we had it taken care of. I have no idea why they even included that in this."

Keidel believes he is some sort of scapegoat to show the city is tough on bars that misbehave, but he challenged the severity of the punishment, which includes a \$500 (originally \$750) fine along with 15 consecutive days closed, adding bars in town in which people have been stabbed and shot were only closed for 24 hours following violent incidents.

"Are exposed breasts really worse than being shot or stabbed in a place?" Keidel wondered.

According to a poll on Riverbender.com, which has been answered 1,382 times at the moment of this writing, 48.26 percent of people do not believe Keidel and his establishment should have been punished at all. The second-most chosen response was that Keidel and the establishment should have been punished, but not as severely as they were with 42.40 percent of the vote. Only 5.50 percent of the votes, or 76 answers, believed the punishment was fair.

Keidel is not saying, nor has he once said, he would like the incident to go away. In fact, he understands the need for the city to do something, adding he would have preferred

what he believed to be a more fair punishment of 15 non-consecutive days closed. He described his bar as a day-to-day operation, saying he needs to be opened every day to maintain the expenses of the business.

Since the publicity of this punishment has spread throughout the Riverbend, Keidel did say more people have been coming into the Bottle and Barrel, causing a definite uptick in revenue. He said he needs to make an additional \$3,000 by this week's end. He added he was confident he could do that, especially with the Thanksgiving Eve being a big party night every year and several events planned throughout the week.

One of those events is a night of music from singer/songwriter Erin Jo Paddlefoot, who will be taking the stage in the back of the bar from 8-10 p.m. this coming Friday. She will be joined by several surprise musical guests as well.

That event was planned by several community activists and organizers, including Monica Mason and Sara McGibany. Mason recently penned an editorial to a local publication discussing simultaneously how the punishment was unfair and why complaining about the mayor and the city will not help anything.

"I'm trying to put the emphasis on helping Chris (Keidel) for both economic and humanitarian reasons," Mason said on Facebook Messenger.

Keidel does not blame Walker for the punishment, either. Like Mason, he wants to focus on the future of the Bottle and Barrel.

Mason said there will be a cocktail hour with friends from 6-8 p.m. Friday evening, before the music starts.