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Tybee Council shuns repeal of ethics ordinance

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When the moment came for a motion to repeal Tybee Island's ethics ordinance, nothing happened.

No one on Tybee's City Council said anything during Thursday's meeting, which lasted well into the night.

So the motion died.

It proved to be an anti-climax to a day's worth of hand-wringing and conspiracy theories among some island residents after the item unexpectedly popped up on the City Council's agenda Wednesday.

"I think there are some parts of it that need some tweaking, but I don't think we need to get rid of the whole thing," said Councilman Eddie Crone.

No council member took responsibility for putting the item on the agenda "to consider suspending or repealing" the ordinance, which was approved only last year.

Others agreed that the language of the ordinance needs some changing and that people need to be trained on what it says.

During the day Thursday, Tybee residents speculated that some new members of the council wanted to change the ordinance because it forces members to recuse themselves from voting on issues that involve people who contribute more than \$500 to political campaigns.

Developers Tom Sullivan and Lou Kietzman last year provided five of the six council members with about \$750 of in-kind contributions for a campaign get-out-the-vote party.

One resident who suggested making changes was Frank Jenkins, an attorney from Cartersville who specializes in municipal law and ethics. He spoke to the council about ethics ordinances during a pre-

meeting workshop.

"I've never seen it before," he said about the limitations of voting on requests from big campaign contributors. "The democratic process runs on campaign contributions.

"I think it potentially could cause a problem with getting a quorum. I think there needs to be some changes, and that's one of them."

Dave Postle, a member of the Tybee Planning Commission, said that Kietzman asked for a variance on a subdivision project last month.

But when the commission delayed a vote to get more information, Kietzman decided to take the matter directly to the City Council, Postle said.

The variance is expected to come before the council next month, but five of the six council members will have to recuse themselves from voting if the ordinance isn't changed.

Tybee resident Linda Gladin, who worked on the committee that devised the ordinance, said the measure was working and to change it so quickly and with little notice "seems really stinky to the public."

"Don't let public confidence go down the tubes," she said.

Council members voted to allow Jenkins and City Attorney Bubba Hughes to suggest changes to the ordinance.

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