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Subject: Times and Democrat: Liquor bill, other local proposals staying alive

Note: A bill that passed from the House to Senate in early April would allow a tax on property in Bamberg School District 2 without a public referendum.

Rep. Bakari Sellers, D-Denmark, said the goal of the bill is to “invest \$20 to \$30 million in a new K-8 school and upfit the high school at its current campus” in Bamberg School District Two.

Sellers said the bill isn’t meant to increase taxes. Instead, it would authorize trustees to find private businesses to fund and construct the buildings. The bill would also authorize the district to use the capital millage to lease the property from the businesses, he said.

Times and Democrat: Liquor bill, other local proposals staying alive

http://thetandd.com/news/liquor-bill-other-local-proposals-staying-alive/article_4d1ea550-d4d5-11e3-92eb-001a4bcf887a.html

Martha Rose Brown

A bill that would allow a downtown Orangeburg restaurant to serve liquor if nearby churches agree cleared a critical hurdle in the General Assembly last week.

Just hours before Thursday’s 5 p.m. “crossover deadline,” Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter’s House bill amending the state’s liquor law was read for the first time in the Senate.

It is one of several bills by local lawmakers still considered viable after the deadline. After the deadline, it takes a two-thirds vote for a House bill to be considered by the Senate, or for a Senate bill to be considered by the House.

Currently in South Carolina, a business in a municipality must be at least 350 feet away from a church, school or playground to get a liquor license. Businesses outside of a municipality must be at least 500 feet away.

Cobb-Hunter’s bill would allow governing bodies of nearby churches, schools and playgrounds to submit statements of support allowing individual businesses to apply for on-premises consumption of liquor.

Rosalia’s Mexican Restaurant on Russell Street would like to serve liquor, but can’t because a church is next door. The bill would allow the church to waive the distance restrictions for Rosalia’s. The bill also has the backing of the Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Association.

With the bill now in the Senate’s hands, Cobb-Hunter said she’s pleased with the bipartisan support it received in the House.

She said the bill “is not trying to take away any power from local government.”

The Orangeburg Democrat thanked DORA and the Orangeburg County Chamber of Commerce for their support of the bill.

Rep. Russell Ott, D-St. Matthews, said of the bill, “You don’t want to push businesses away that want to come in and try and bring revenue.”

Sen. John Matthews, D-Bowman, said, “I’m going to support that.”

Matthews said the Senate Judiciary Committee is discussing the bill.

Another bill in the Senate Judiciary Committee would create “Eartha Kitt Day” in South Carolina and would honor the legendary singer on her birthday, Jan. 17, without making it an official state holiday.

Kitt, a native of the Orangeburg County town of North, achieved international fame.

“I’m amazed about how many people around the world have contacted me about that bill and see the significance of Kitt as a cultural icon,” Cobb-Hunter said this week.

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A House-approved bill that’s in discussion by a Senate subcommittee would protect pets belonging to victims of domestic abuse.

Cobb-Hunter introduced the bill in January 2013 and it was read for the first time in the Senate on March 27 this year. She is executive director of CASA/Family Systems, which helps victims of domestic abuse.

Cobb-Hunter said “pets become like family members and when you start abusing pets, that’s personal.”

She said there are often cases where a victim’s pet has been abused by the perpetrator as “a way to get back at the victim.”

The proposed bill to amend the state’s domestic abuse law is aimed to protect a victim’s pet from being abused or harassed.

She encourages those who are interested in this bill to contact their senators to express their support.