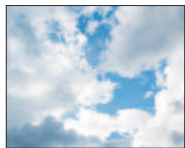


Cloudy skies and a little bit cooler



High today in the mid to upper 70s.
Low tonight in the low to mid 50s.
Skies clearing on Monday, high of 75.
Lows in the mid 50s for several days.

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- Thumbs up, Thumbs down, Pg. 4
- Bamboozled by a grebe, Pg. 7
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On your ballot

Ruston alcohol sales push to begin

By Nancy Bergeron
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Backers of a proposal to expand alcohol sales in Ruston say they're ready to begin their push toward the March 25 referendum.

"Our main thing is we're going to say vote 'yes' on all (the propositions on the ballot)," consultant John Hatch said Friday.

Primarily at issue is whether local stores can sell high-content alcohol, including wine and liquor. Walmart and Brookshire's, parent company of Super 1 Foods, are behind the move.

But what complicates the pending vote is a state law requiring all five Louisiana local-option possibilities to be on the ballot. Each option must be voted on separately.

If city voters want to keep the alcohol options already in effect, they must vote them back in again, plus decide on the high-content question, as well as another option that would allow bars in the city.

"It's confusing. There's no doubt about it," Ruston City Attorney Bill Carter said.

The last local-option election was in November 2002 and centered on allowing restaurants to serve alcohol for consumption on premises.

In that referendum voters approved low-content sales at grocery and convenience stores — primarily beer and wine coolers — and high- and low-content sales at restaurants. But they rejected bars and the high-content

KNOW WHAT'S ON YOUR BALLOT

1. Shall the sale of beverages of alcoholic content containing not more than six percent alcohol by volume be permitted by package only and not for consumption on the premises in the City of Ruston?

What it means: This allows stores, such as grocery and convenience stores, to sell package alcoholic beverages with less than 6% alcohol content. That's typically beer. Those sales are currently allowed in Ruston.

2. Shall the sale of beverages of alcoholic content containing not more than six percent alcohol by volume for consumption on the premises be permitted in the City of Ruston?

What it means: This allows licensed establishments to sell low-alcohol content beverages, such as beer, to be consumed on site. Those sales are currently allowed in Ruston.

3. Shall the sale of beverage alcohol containing one-half of one percent alcohol by volume and above for consumption on the premises be permitted in the City of Ruston?

sales at grocery and convenience stores.

Balloting is already underway for the approximately 657 city voters eligible to vote by mail. Those ballots must be returned to the parish registrar of voters office by 4:30 p.m. March 24.

Early voting for in-person voters begins March 11.

What it means: This would allow traditional bars to open in Ruston. Bars are not currently allowed.

4. Shall the sale of beverages of alcoholic content containing one-half of one percent alcohol by volume and above by the package only and not for consumption on the premises be permitted in the City of Ruston.

What it means: This would allow Walmart, Super 1, Shopper's Value and any other business that's 15,000 square feet or larger, to sell packaged high-content alcohol, including wine and liquor. This is the proposal Walmart and Brookshire's are pushing.

5. Shall the sale of beverages of high and low alcoholic content be permitted only on the premises of restaurant establishments which have been issued an "R" permit as defined by law the City of Ruston?

What it means: This allows restaurants to sell high- and low-content drinks for consumption on site. Restaurant sales have been legal in Ruston since 2002.

In December, Ruston's Board of Aldermen voted unanimously to call the referendum, but the move was mostly a formality. By law, a governing body must set an election if 25% of the voters ask it to do so.

That happened in late November.

"It's time to remind everybody that signing the petition was just

part one," Hatch said. "Now they need to do part two, which is come out and vote."

It was Hatch's Texas-based firm that carried the petition for Walmart and Brookshire's.

The corporations claim expanded sales will not only give customers more choices,

See **ALCOHOL SALES**, page 5



Whitney Houston tribute booked at the Dixie Center

By Brian Trahan
editor@rustonleader.com

April 13.

"With the Dixie Center doing more shows we're just excited to be able to provide such a wide array of acts and entertainment," Judy Copeland, Executive Director of the Dixie Center, said. "Shows like this should attract a large audience and we're just doing our part to get people in the doors and out and about in downtown Ruston. Everybody wins when you have people visit downtown."

Are you a child of the MTV generation? Do you remember the popularity of music videos? Perhaps you're just a fan of one of the most memorable voices in music history.

Known as "The Voice" in music lore, the late Whitney Houston was responsible for multiple top-selling albums and No. 1 hits during her career, which was cut short at the age of 48.

Now her fans in the Ruston area can relive those memories for a night when "Queen of the Night! A Whitney Houston Tribute" makes a one-night appearance at the Dixie Center for the Arts on

The tribute will be a 90-minute show featuring a six-piece band doing their part to pay homage to Houston's talent.

Cherul Brown will

See **WHITNEY**, page 5

HONORING THE PAST INSPIRING THE FUTURE BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Local credit union provided options for Black families

By Brenda Daniel
Special to the Leader

In the early 1960s, laws that governed the mainstream financial institutions were not favorable, or were non-existent for Black citizens. The chances for borrowing money for home purchases or large amounts for personal use were little to none.

To create some leverage for low to average income of Black families, and educate them in the banking system, the Lincoln Parish Federal Credit Union was established in Ruston.

The founders, C.P. Payne, (clergy) I.R. Dunn, (clergy) C.D. Simmons, (businessman) Albert McHenry, (educator) and Sydney Smith (businessman)

were respected leaders and influencers in Black communities. They worked together to pioneer their vision for this first of its kind in the city of Ruston.

The credit union was initially housed in the library of Lincoln Elementary School, which was then located in one of the more prominent Black communities, Washington Heights. McHenry, who was also the principal of the school, was selected to run the operations of the initiative, and was the only employee for years.

The credit union was well supported by the people it served and although it only offered savings accounts, it brought a sense of pride, particularly for those who had never had the experience of institutional banking. At the start-up, smaller loans were made to



Photo by Jenn Kilpatrick

Now showing: Alice in Wonderland

The Ruston Community Theatre's production of "Alice in Wonderland" is currently featured at the Dixie Center for the Arts this weekend, with a show Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. Here, Tea Party Cast members Jude Hanchey (Frog Footman), Ayden Brown (King), and Esther Allen (Small Queen of Hearts) rehearse for the show.



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See **CREDIT UNION**, page 5