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Representative Reid Petty addresses the Liberal City Commission Tuesday night at the commission chambers. The topic at hand was the city ordinance exempting Liberal from the state's Personal and Family Protection Act for six months. The act is a state law concerned with allowing concealed carry into public buildings. Petty spoke to the commission of the state legislator's approval for the act, and the positive effects of concealed carry. L&T photo/Victoria Calderon

By VICTORIA CALDERON

• Leader & Times

Tuesday night's city commission urged several citizens out of their homes to hear and speak about the city ordinance concerning the Personal and Family Protection Act (Bill No. 2052) – the new concealed carry state law – including Representative Reid Petty himself.

City Ordinance No. 4411, which was voted on at the meeting, was created to exempt Liberal

from the new state law requiring county and municipal governments to allow concealed carry into public buildings.

The law is to go into effect July 1, but allows six month exemptions so local governing bodies can have more time to come up with a plan. They can choose to either allow concealed carry or uphold adequate security measures, such as metal detectors and guards at every entrance, in their buildings.

Since security measures at this level would cost the city at least \$3 million, the commission wished to have more time to “further study the implications of allowing concealed carry licensees to carry concealed handguns... into any or all buildings owned or leased by the City,” as stated in the ordinance.

Commissioner Joe Denoyer in particular wanted to look at examples from other municipalities. “I’d like to take it a step further to be looking into a couple other communities in northeast Kansas that have allowed open carry,” he told the commission. “Now is the time to look at what other communities are doing, keeping in mind that we want to keep everybody as safe as possible.”

The ordinance was then opened up to comments from citizens. Since it was an issue concerning the state legislature, Reid Petty voiced his approval of Bill 2052.

“This is a very well thought out bill, one that was discussed thoroughly amongst the House, and the Senate passed with over 30 votes out of 40,” Petty said.

He also explained that there are 92 Republicans and 33 Democrats in the House of Representatives, and the bill passed with over 100 votes.

“This bill was not a partisan bill, where one party really pushed it,” Petty said.

As far as the idea behind the law, Petty referenced the Colorado movie theater shooting.

“There were, I believe, eight or nine movie theaters within a 30 mile radius; the shooter chose to go to the only one that did not allow concealed carry, and had the sign on the door,” he stated. “To me, that sign is an open invitation to somebody who wants to break the law that there aren’t likely any guns in there.”

A couple of other citizens in the audience also voiced their concerns regarding the ordinance.

One major issue with the ordinance was with the stated belief that the new law would potentially degrade public safety.

Citizen Steve Rogacki told the commission, “I remember when they first starting talking about concealed carry, and they were predicting shootouts at every corner during rush hour in every town in America. And I don’t remember ever having read about any of those, and I don’t remember having read about any concealed carrier causing the problem.”

Since the ordinance directly stated, “the City administration has advised the Commission that not only would allowing persons with concealed carry permits to bring firearms into City buildings likely have no positive effect on safety but could, in fact, decrease the safety and security of the staff, general public and other visitors to City buildings,” the paragraph was taken by citizen Larry Phillips to be an opinion. He was against using an opinion directly in the ordinance as guidance, and preferred data to beliefs in this instance.

“Every study I’ve seen in states with concealed carry and cities with concealed carry and counties with concealed carry: serious crime has reduced over the last five years,” he told the commission.

However, Phillips gave credit to opinion where it was due.

“The opinions of a majority of the legislative body, the governor, and a majority of the people of Kansas have okayed this law and saw it through,” he said. “I hope that bears some weight when you make your final decisions.”

Petty said, “In terms of the exemption you’re about to vote on, personally, I don’t have a problem with holding that out until January so you guys can really look at things.”

However, Rogacki did have a slight problem with putting off the new law.

“If you apply for the extension,” he explained, “the implication is that you’re going to spend that much money to provide the level of security that they require. And it seems to me that you’re throwing the money away. You’re trying to keep the good guys out.”

The commission took all opinions under consideration, and in the end, the ordinance was voted on and passed 5-0.

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