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NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on December 19, 2011

Sunday alcohol sales start Jan. 1 in Oakwood

Council gave final OK at Monday meeting

OAKWOOD — The Oakwood City Council gave its final OK Monday to starting Sunday alcohol sales.

The council voted without discussion on the matter at a called meeting at City Hall.

The new law allows Sunday sales of beer, wine and liquor at city package stores and other businesses, such as convenience and grocery stores.

The decision follows slim voter approval on Nov. 8 of Sunday sales. A law passed by the General Assembly earlier this year gave cities and counties the option of allowing residents to consider the issue at the ballot box.

Oakwood's ordinance prohibits sales on Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

And because Christmas falls on a Sunday, the earliest Sunday sales could start in Oakwood is New Year's Day.

Gainesville merchants began Sunday sales Dec. 11. Flowery Branch was among the first cities in Georgia to start Sunday sales when it began the practice on Nov. 20.

Hall County residents will have a say March 6 - the same day as Georgia's presidential preference primary - on whether they want Sunday alcohol sales in unincorporated areas.

Complicating that matter, however, is a law requiring counties and municipalities that do not already have laws allowing for the sale of packaged liquor to collect the signatures of at least 35 percent of "registered and qualified voters" before a referendum can be held to change it.

County officials are lobbying to change the law.

In other business Monday, the Oakwood council gave a final OK to annexing 31.66 acres at 4020 Enterprise Way, in the Tanners Creek Business Park on Thurmon Tanner Parkway.