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## Community August 11, 2006

### Fines for underage drinking

In response to growing concerns over underage alcohol consumption, the Moorpark City Council voted unanimously to enact a social host ordinance that would allow authorities to cite party hosts with a \$1,000 fine.

The local ordinance, adopted Aug. 2, mirrors a county law implemented earlier this year.

The law, which will go into effect 30 days after the council's second reading on Aug. 16, enables the city to fine the host of a party where underage drinkers are served.

The fine is meant to discourage juveniles from consuming alcohol at private gatherings, the most common venues where minors drink.

"Home parties are the No. 1 environment where young people get drunk," said Daniel Hicks, administrator for the Ventura County Limits Project.

According to the council's staff report, Moorpark authorities responded to 337 calls about unruly, noisy parties last year. Underage drinking is also linked to nearly half of all teen car accidents, the report stated.

The civil fine imposed against social hosts and landowners will enable the city to recover the costs of responding to problems at gatherings where youth drink alcohol.

The new law designates as a party any gathering where two or more juveniles are present and alcohol is available.

The ordinance is primarily aimed at adults who host gatherings where minors consume alcohol, but underage hosts also can be cited.

Deputies will be allowed to fine hosts without going to court because the citation is a civil matter, Chief Dep. Geoff Dean of the Ventura County Sheriff's Department said in an earlier interview.

--Sylvie Belmond

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