

Liquor license request for former Foxy's goes to open hearing before Port council

A hearing on Troy Koput's application for a liquor license for the former Foxy's tavern in downtown Port Washington is expected to be held during the Tuesday, Dec. 18, Common Council meeting.

Koput, of West Bend, said Tuesday he is requesting the hearing be held in public, rather than in a closed session.

"I don't have anything to hide," he told Ozaukee Press. "This way, if people want to say something, they can. I feel like we have enough support that it could change some minds."

Last month, Koput applied for liquor and cabaret licenses for the tavern at 219 N. Franklin St., which would be renamed Deville's Lounge.

On this license application, he listed Christian Zaja, a former bartender at Foxy's, as the person who would manage the bar.

But Tuesday, Koput said he no longer intends to hire Zaja.

"I let Christian Zaja go," he said. "I had to."

Some officials had expressed fear that even though Koput has said he wants to turn the bar's reputation around, creating a lounge that can be enjoyed by adults of all ages, it would continue to be a hangout for young people whose rowdy behavior would cause problems.

"I don't think the Common Council wants another Foxy's type of bar in the downtown, especially next to a building that will be the cornerstone for future downtown development," City Administrator Mark Grams said, referring to the former Lueptow's Furniture building. "They're spending a couple million dollars in improvements there, and the city is going to be improving the (adjoining) alleyway.

"The last thing I want are people walking through a new pedestrian way dodging around broken bottles and urine."

Aldermen tabled action on the applications after City Attorney Eric Eberhardt told them that, according to city ordinances, they could not act until after the police chief, fire chief and building inspector conducted required inspections and issued written reports.

Eberhardt explained that if any of the officials recommend denying the license, a hearing on

Tavern's fate to be decided by city Dec. 18

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the matter would be held before the Common Council. The hearing would be closed to the public unless the applicant requested it be held in open session.

Grams said he and Police Chief Kevin Hingiss recommended the council not approve the application.

A background check done by the police department showed that during the eight years Foxy's was in business, officers had 134 contacts with the tavern. Of those, 36 were for disorderly conduct complaints, 17 for theft, 11 for fights, 11 for battery and 10 for loud and unnecessary noise. A three-page outline listed many of the incidents, which included several times when underage people were served or found on the premises.

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Building Inspector Gary Peterson submitted a list of 25 code violations that need to be fixed before an application can be approved. After the work is done, the premises must be reinspected before an occupancy permit can be issued, Eberhardt said.

"I understand the building's got to be up to code," Koput said. "I want to do this right. I'm trying to take the best steps forward I can.

"I've got a lot of time invested in this. It's my business. It's my money. I want this to be a success."