

Tavern license request riles neighbors

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Port residents cite noise concerns but officials grant cabaret permit, saying concerns can be addressed if they arise

Sundance tavern is the latest bar in Port Washington to receive city approval to serve food and beverages on an outdoor patio, where entertainment may also be provided.

The Common Council on Tuesday voted, 6-1, to approve a cabaret license and a conditional use permit that will provide for these outdoor services in a fenced area on the southwest side of the tavern at 551 N. Wisconsin St.

Only Ald. Jim Vollmar dissented, noting that several neighbors had expressed concern that the noise will be disruptive.

While the permit allows the tavern to serve food and beverages and have music outside until 10 p.m., several neighbors asked that the patio be closed earlier.

“The people and the noise and the music were all inside. Now you’re bringing the bar into the neighborhood,” said Karina Gross, 553 N. Harrison St. “We’re hearing the foul language. We’re having people walk through our yards.

“Why does this have to be in a residential neighborhood? There are plenty of empty storefronts in downtown.”

She and her husband Link told aldermen they have no problem allowing diners outside on the patio, but Mr. Gross said he preferred not having alcoholic beverages served or music played there.

There are enough problems having a tavern in the neighborhood, he said, and these could be exacerbated with the outdoor area.

Kyle Knop, 507 Catulpa St., told aldermen that since the statewide ban on smoking in taverns, more people have been congregating outside the bar and that’s when problems have occurred.

“It’s when people are outside and they’re cursing, vulgarities are being thrown about,” he said.

Randy Tetzlaff, the city’s director of planning and development, said the intent of the bar owners is to serve food and beverages and offer “music on the green,” relatively soft music, primarily during the day.

The conditional use permit is identical to those issued to other city taverns and restaurants when they have opened outdoor areas, he noted.

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If problems arise, the council has the authority to revoke the permit or add more restrictions, Tetzlaff added.

“We’re trying to be as careful as we can. We don’t want any problems up there,” said Lila Parent, who with Pat Montalto owns the tavern. “We certainly don’t intend to have a wild band out there. I understand there are young families living around our building.”

But, she added, the bar has been in the neighborhood since the 1860s, and neighbors knew it was there when they moved in.

Ald. Paul Neumyer noted that there have been few complaints filed with the police department.

“It’s very hard to limit something if we don’t have a record of problems,” he said.

Many of the neighbors’ comments are about problems happening now and can’t be attributed to the patio, Ald. Dave Larson said. They should be dealt with on their own, not as if they are being caused by the outdoor area.

Although aldermen initially considered limiting the music to acoustic offerings, they eliminated that restriction.

“I don’t think that’s fair,” Ald. Dan Becker said. “We haven’t done any restrictions on any one of the permits we’ve approved. I think we should keep everybody on the same playing field. Let’s see what happens.”