

2022-0270 Public Hearing and Conditional Use Recommendation - File No. PCU2022-0004 - to allow alcoholic beverage sales for on-premises consumption at Baldwin's Brasserie, 3784 S. Rochester Rd., located between South Blvd. and M-59., zoned B-3 Shopping Center Business District with an FB-3 Flexible Business Overlay, Parcel No. 15-34-477-018, Emily D'Agostini Kunath, Applicant
(Staff Report dated 6/8/22, Floor Plan dated 4/5/22, Elevations, Marketing Materials, EIS, Public Comment and PHN had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record thereof.)

Present were applicant Emily D'Agostini Kunath, D'Agostini Companies, 38700 Van Dyke, Suite 200, Sterling Heights, Michigan, 48312, Rose Marie Baldwin, Chief Operating Officer, Baldwin Restaurant Group, and Jeffrey Baldwin, resident of Harrison Township. Mr. Baldwin noted that they own two restaurants, one in Harrison Township and one in Clinton Township.

Chairperson Brnabic introduced this item and noted that it was a request for a conditional use recommendation to allow alcoholic beverage sales and consumption at Baldwin's Brasserie, 3784 South Rochester Road, located between South Boulevard and M-59, zoned B-3 Shopping Center Business District with an FB-3 Flexible Business overlay.

Mr. Kapelanski explained that this request is similar to the previous request this evening, as it is a Conditional Use request for alcohol sales on-premises, and no exterior changes are proposed. She noted that this is at Gateway Development, which is near the corner of South Boulevard and Rochester, currently under construction.

Chairperson Brnabic noted that she will open the public hearing and stated that she sees no one in the audience and no cards for anyone wishing to speak. She noted that she had one email from Janet Salisbury who is opposed to approval of the conditional use to allow sales for on-premise alcohol. She then closed the Public Hearing at 8:29 p.m.

Mr. Hooper stated that he presumes that this is going on the north half of the retail center, and commented that when this was put forth for development it was noted that this would be a restaurant site. He questioned whether they will be bringing in a liquor license into the community.

Mr. Baldwin responded that they are applying for a Class C quota license and would not be bringing one in.

Mr. Hooper noted that this would be subject to obtaining the quota license, which may or may not happen. He mentioned that he and his wife have eaten at J. Baldwin's and had a very enjoyable experience, so he can attest to the quality of the food.

Mr. Baldwin responded that they have had that location for 18 years now.

Chairperson Brnabic stated that she supports the Conditional Use for on-premise alcohol sales. She commented that it is nice to see them all

working together as a family.

Ms. Denstaedt questioned what the seating capacity will be and if they will take reservations.

Ms. Baldwin responded that it will be approximately 175 and they will take reservations. She explained that both restaurants take reservations and noted that the whole culture in hospitality since Covid has led to consumers wanting reservations, which has been fantastic operationally and helped the industry out greatly.

Mr. Dettloff questioned whether they have encountered the labor situation in restaurants and if they anticipate any issues.

Ms. Baldwin responded that they have much loyalty with their staff members as an independent restaurant group and is proud to note that their managers receive full health care, 401K, and paid vacations. She added that they are now opening up paid vacations to the hourly employees, and they have the 401K options. She noted that they close on holidays, including Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving, and mentioned that this year they closed for the first time on Easter Sunday. She explained that it is holidays that they themselves want to enjoy. She commented that they are there to make the employees' lives wonderful and they will have their loyalty. She stated that their turnover is very low compared to the industry standard.

Mr. Dettloff questioned whether there will be an outdoor patio.

Ms. Baldwin responded that there are plans to do an outdoor patio and explained that there is an outdoor patio at both of their current restaurants. She stated that they are very successful, and noted that Baldwin's opens panels up in the summer where Testa Barra keeps them closed. She commented that they have plans with the patio and plans with the design, and have looked at the floorplan very strategically so that the path that serves the customer is very close to where the kitchen will be located.

Mr. Dettloff expressed his thanks for their consideration of Rochester Hills, and he welcomed them to Oakland County.

Mr. Baldwin stated that they both grew up in Oakland County and moved to the east side in 1994, and they are looking forward to being in Oakland County.

Ms. Baldwin stated that this project has been in the works in conversations with Ms. D'Agostini for four years.

Ms. D'Agostini stated that they came before this Commission in 2018, and that year they were approved. She noted that her father Gene had the pleasure of meeting Rose and Jeff at a wine dinner in 2018 and have been working on this relationship ever since. She stated that she envisions a showpiece restaurant at this center that is not a chain, and is well-run locally. She stated that Covid only made them stronger. She noted that both of their restaurants competed for Hour Magazine's number one restaurant this year, and one won the top spot.

She commented that some of the children have been on Food Network and competed successfully.

Ms. Baldwin stated that she has two children in the business, and her son Jeffrey, Director of Operations, has gone through the sommelier program. She noted that they fund the program and they are learning their wine and beverage skills and stated that they now have 11 sommeliers in their company, with four making it to level two, which is very hard to do. She commented that they believe in education for their staff, and noted that their managers are sent to Dale Carnegie. She stated that they win because their team is more knowledgeable. She mentioned that Michael and Gabriele have been with the team since they met at the Culinary Institute in New York, and came in as young, spirited good cooks, and Testa Barra made them chefs. She stated that they want to nurture the second generation and do something in Oakland County.

Mr. Baldwin stated that this is the first A+ location that they have had.

Dr. Bowyer stated that she is impressed with how they treat their employees and the success that they have had. She noted that they are unique and not a chain and it will be a great location. She mentioned that they have four quota licenses for the next four years, and commented that this would be the first one that they would perhaps entertain granting. She stated that if they come to Council and show that they have all those extra reasons that they will be a destination and will bring people to the city, it will be more of what Council is interested in. She asked if they have a chef's table.

Ms. Baldwin responded that they will have a chef's table and will have the signature calamari that Jeff created at the Whitney restaurant. She commented that if they opened up an Asian or Spanish restaurant or a Brasserie, which is a modern American with French overtones to it, they would have calamari on the menu.

Mr. Struzik stated that he appreciates that the business will be closed on holidays for the workers. He commented that they try not to go to those businesses on those days because they do not want to encourage them to be open. He stated that this is a great concept for the site and for the city and he looks forward to seeing their business in Oakland County.

Mr. Hooper moved the motion in the packet, which was supported by Ms. Neubauer.

After the voice vote, Chairperson Brnabic announced that the motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Hooper, seconded by Neubauer, that this matter be Recommended for Approval to the City Council Regular Meeting,. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 7 - Bowyer, Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Hooper, Neubauer and Struzik

Excused 2 - Gallina and Weaver

Resolved, in the matter of City File No. PCU2022-0004 (Baldwin's Brasserie), the Planning Commission recommends to City Council Approval of the Conditional Use to allow sales for on premises alcoholic beverage consumption, based on documents received by the Planning Department on May 24 and 25, 2022 with the following findings:

Findings

1. The proposed use will promote the intent and purpose of the Zoning Ordinance.
2. The building has been designed and is proposed to be operated, maintained, and managed so as to be compatible, harmonious, and appropriate in appearance with the existing and planned character of the general vicinity, adjacent uses of land, and the capacity of public services and facilities affected by the use.
3. The proposal should have a positive impact on the community as a whole and the surrounding area by further offering jobs.
4. The proposed development is served adequately by essential public facilities and services, such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, water and sewer, drainage ways, and refuse disposal.
5. The proposed development should not be detrimental, hazardous, or disturbing to existing or future neighboring land uses, persons, property, or the public welfare.
6. The proposal will not create additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services that will be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.

Conditions

1. City Council approval of the Conditional Use.
2. Public hours of operation for the restaurant will be 3:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. Tuesday - Thursday, 3:00 p.m. - 12:00 a.m. Saturday, 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Sunday, and closed Mondays.