

LICENSE HEARING MINUTES
Bildrnrin-Baldingers 1888 LLC, dba Razava Bread Company, 685 Grand Avenue
Monday, August 12, 10:00 AM
Room 330 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Boulevard West
Nhia Vang, Legislative Hearing Officer

The hearing was called to order at 10:00 AM

Staff Present: Tom Ferrara, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) Licensing Inspector; Frances Birch, DSI Zoning Inspector

Licensee: Steven Baldinger, Applicant/Owner; Laura Boyd, Liquor License Consultant

License Application: Liquor On Sale - 100 seats or less, Liquor On Sale - Sunday, and Liquor-Outdoor Service Area (Patio) licenses

Legislative Hearing Officer Nhia Vang made introductory comments about the hearing process: This is an informal legislative hearing for a license application. This license application required a Class N notification to inform neighbors and the District Council about the application and provide them with an opportunity to submit comments. The city received correspondence of concern/objection, which triggered this hearing.

The hearing will proceed as follows: DSI staff will explain their review of the application and state their recommendation. The applicant will be asked to discuss their business plan. Members of the community will be invited to testify as to whether they object to or support the license application. At the end of the hearing, the Legislative Hearing Officer will develop a recommendation for the City Council to consider. The recommendation will come before the City Council as a resolution on the Consent Agenda; the City Council is the final authority on whether the license is approved or denied.

There are three possible results from this hearing: 1) a recommendation that the City Council issue this license without any conditions; 2) a recommendation that the City Council issue this license with agreed upon conditions; or 3) a recommendation that the City Council not issue this license but refer it to the city attorney's office to take an adverse action on the application, which could involve review by an administrative law judge.

Minutes:

Tom Ferrara, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) - Licensing, gave a staff report for licensee Bildrnrin-Baldingers 1888 LLC, (License ID# 20240001073), d/b/a Razava Bread Company, located at 685 Grand Avenue. The application is for Liquor On Sale - 100 seats or less, Liquor On Sale - Sunday, and Liquor-Outdoor Service Area (Patio) licenses. DSI is recommending approval with the following license conditions:

Recommended License Conditions:

1. Licensee agrees to operate the establishment in compliance with Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative Code as a "Restaurant".
2. Licensee agrees to close the establishment at 12:00 a.m. midnight. All patron/customers shall vacate the premises by 12:30 a.m. each day of the week as per Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative Code.

3. Licensee acknowledges that the placement of any items in the public right-of-way (i.e., sidewalk) requires prior written authorization and an Obstruction Permit from the Department of Public Works. And, that any liquor service in the public right-of-way requires additional licensing from the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI).

Ferrara then stated that Condition 3 was being removed because the outdoor seating was on private property.

The District 16 Summit Hill Association submitted a letter of support. Building review in process; License approved with conditions; and Zoning approved.

Hearing Officer Vang asked if the applicant understood and agreed to the conditions listed on the Class N Notification.

Steven Baldinger: I agree to them, including removing #3 since the patio is on private property.

Hearing Officer Vang asked about the Zoning review.

Frances Birch, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) - Zoning, gave a staff report. The area is zoned T3 – Traditional Neighborhood. This is a permitted use. This is in the special sign district for Grand Avenue and the Grand Avenue Historic District. For the signs on the windows, if the logo is larger than 6 feet, they will need a sign permit.

Hearing Officer Vang asked whether there are signs on the property and referenced the photographs in the packet.

Baldinger: They are just there temporarily while we do construction. They're just placards and will be replaced by windows. There will be minimal writing on the Grand Avenue windows. The window writing will be on St. Albans side.

Hearing Officer Vang verified that the windows should have enough visibility for applicant to see the patio space to monitor liquor in the outdoor space from the inside. She then asked about the business: history, hours of operation, number of employees, etc.

Baldinger: This will be a neighborhood bakery with artisan breads and coffee. It will mostly be a morning and mid-afternoon café. The focus will be on retail breads and being a part of the community. We also want to have the ability to create events for the neighborhood like wine and cheese nights. We may want to evolve over time.

Hearing Officer Vang asked about staffing.

Baldinger: Most of the space is the bakery, and then we have a small retail space. The general manager will run the front end with the baristas. We will have 12 staff total, with only 3-4 front house staff.

Hearing Officer Vang asked whether mixed drinks will be on the menu or only available for special occasions.

Baldinger: They will just be for special events. The alcohol normally available will just be wine and beer.

Hearing Officer Vang asked about the seating plan.

Baldinger: We have small seating areas inside and out. We don't have space for larger gatherings.

Hearing Officer Vang referenced the letters received and asked about the outdoor seating on the St Albans side.

Baldinger: We offered to not put tables and chairs on St. Albans to be good neighbors. We don't want a condition there though, which would restrict things for the future. We want to have the patio on the Grand Avenue side when we open.

Hearing Officer Vang again referenced the letters received and mentioned the request to put up a barrier between the patio and the public right of way. She indicated that from the photographs, it doesn't look like a barrier would fit in the tight space.

Baldinger: That is correct.

Hearing Officer Vang then asked about outdoor lighting.

Baldinger: There are streetlamps on the corner and another lamp across from the door.

Hearing Officer Vang asked about the business hours and whether it would be the same for both the inside and outside spaces.

Baldinger: Yes. We're not open yet but hours will probably be 7am – 3pm or 4pm most days, with maybe staying open until 7pm or 8pm once a week, aside from special events. We need to wait and see.

Boyd: It depends on demand. If neighbors want the business to be open later, things may change.

Baldinger: We don't want restrictions, so that we can evolve as the neighborhood wants us to.

Hearing Officer Vang asked about the applicant's background.

Baldinger: My background is in baking. We've had a family business since 1888 and mostly done commercial baking. With this, we are getting back to our retail roots. This location is not far from our original retail location on Carrol Avenue.

Hearing Officer Vang asked about staff receiving liquor training.

Baldinger: Our general manger has been extensively trained in coffee and liquor service.

Hearing Officer Vang asked whether the business would have a separate space for ordering retail food versus sit-down service.

Baldinger: It's just one counter. Things like breads will be behind the counter like what Panera Bread does.

Hearing Officer Vang asked whether applicant would be providing parking.

Baldinger: No. We will just have street parking.

Hearing Officer Vang asked whether he is leasing the space.

Baldinger: Correct.

Hearing Officer Vang asked if applicant would be at the business every day.

Baldinger: I don't intend to be. The general manager will handle day-to-day operations.

Hearing Officer Vang asked about his opening date.

Baldinger: Hopefully not long after Labor Day.

Hearing Officer Vang asked whether construction has been completed.

Baldinger: The interior space is 80% done. The outdoor space and the rest of the building have been completed for a while. These are just interior renovations.

Hearing Officer Vang asked whether there would be a soft launch date.

Baldinger: We will hopefully start testing equipment by end of month.

Hearing Officer Vang asked about garbage pickup and supply delivery.

Baldinger: We have good relations with the two restaurants just to our west in the same building and will be partnering with them on waste removal. We also share a door for employee access, and we will pick up deliveries at the same location as well. We will do what they do.

Hearing Officer Vang asked whether disposable plates and silverware will be used in the outdoor service areas as it can contribute to trash complaints associated with businesses operating on the sidewalk.

Baldinger: It will all be restaurant ware. Nothing disposable.

Hearing Officer Vang next read into the record the letter of objection from Hillary Parson, who withdrew her letter with concerns about hours, noise, and encroachment into the public right of way. She then gave the applicant the opportunity to respond.

Baldinger: We were happy to have a good conversation with her.

Hearing Officer Vang next read into the record the letter of objection from Merit Kucera, whose letter voiced concerns about hours, noise, and encroachment into the public right of way. She then gave the applicant the opportunity to respond.

Boyd: After the 4 objections we reached from the neighbors, we let them know we would not do seating on St. Albans if they withdrew their objections. We think the neighbors might have liked them and might be sad they're gone. We understand the concerns though. We want to operate the Grand Avenue side without restrictions.

Baldinger: The original plan was to have 2-3 tables on the St. Albans side.

Hearing Officer Vang next read into the record the letters of objection from Sonja Mason, whose letters voiced concerns about hours, noise, and encroachment into the public right of way. She then gave the applicant the opportunity to respond.

Boyd: None of the building residents expressed concern, for what it's worth. We had a neighborhood meeting and there wasn't an opinion from the district council that restrictions were needed. The general manager lives 3 blocks away and is part of the community. We understand the anxiety about a new business though.

Hearing Officer Vang acknowledge that it would be challenging to implement some of the suggested conditions raised by Ms. Mason as the patio is on private property. However, she informed the applicant that the City's noise ordinance would still be in effect and encouraged the applicant to continue to be a good neighbor and to work with residents to resolve issues.

Baldinger: We want to be good neighbors. That's our focus.

Hearing Officer Vang stated that the applicant's plan regarding liquor service demonstrates that commitment.

She next read into the record the letter of objection from Brenda Besser, whose letter voiced concerns about hours, noise, and encroachment into the public right of way. She then gave the applicant the opportunity to respond.

Baldinger: As of today, the plan is to not be open past 8pm, but we don't know what the future holds.

Hearing Officer Vang then read into the record the letter of support from the Summit Hill Association.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Hearing Officer Vang stated that after reviewing the records and considering the testimonies from all parties, she will recommend to the City Council that they approve the license with the following agreed-upon conditions:

1. Licensee agrees to operate the establishment in compliance with Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative Code as a "Restaurant".
2. Licensee agrees to close the establishment at 12:00 a.m. midnight. All patron/customers shall vacate the premises by 12:30 a.m. each day of the week as per Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative Code.

The hearing adjourned at 10:30 AM.

The conditions affidavit was signed on August 12, 2024, and submitted on August 14, 2024.