

Historical committee formed

The Farmington City Council Tuesday filled 14 of 15 openings on the new Historical Museum Development Committee, charged with mapping out fund-raising strategies and improving public awareness about the Gov. Fred Warner Mansion.

Appointed were John Anhalt, James McLaughlin, Leon Kohls, James McGilney, Penny Leato, Robert Sklar, Michael Harrison, Dick Carvell, Bill McNeese, Valerie McNeese, Michele Jakaeki, David Carron, Dave Litogot and Mayor JoAnne McShane. A council representative will be selected.

Before the meeting, goals and objectives of the committee were discussed, but still need to be finalized, said City Manager Frank Lauhoff.

"This is a dynamic group," McShane said following the meeting. "... These are caring, thoughtful residents."

On tap

4 restaurants clear 1st hurdle for beer, wine

BY TIM SMITH STAFF WRITER

Customers at Luigi's Restaurant sometimes get up and leave after finding out they can't get a glass of wine or beer with their meal.

"They say, 'How can you have a plate of pasta and not have a glass of wine?'" said Vivian Belcastro, who in mid-1995 took over the downtown Farmington Road business along with husband Domenico. "They walk out, but they're apologetic."

Domenico Belcastro concurred that his restaurant loses business because beer and wine aren't available with moderately priced meals. But he stressed that, if Luigi's received the Class C license, the eatery will not "push the beer and wine" on to customers. "I'm not a liquor store. It's just for convenience."

The Belcastros hope the dilemma soon becomes a thing of the past. Farmington council members Tuesday night forwarded to the Michigan Liquor Control Commission applications from Luigi's and three other downtown restaurants for Class C Liquor Licenses - allowable

■ 'They say, "How can you have a plate of pasta and not have a glass of wine?" They walk out, but they're apologetic.'

Vivian Belcastro
-co-owner, Luigi's Restaurant

under a state act that allows additional licenses in qualified Downtown Development Authority Districts.

Also approved for final consideration by the LCC were applications from Mrs. Lovill's Tea Cozy, Dimitrie's of Farmington and the Thai Kitchen.

According to Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff, he expects to find out whether the applications were approved or rejected within 30 days. If all four are approved, the city will own 11 Class C licenses, which allow beer and wine to be consumed on the premises.

"All are qualified applicants," said Lauhoff, noting that anywhere from 0-50 new licenses can be issued under Public Act 440, which can only be taken advantage of until the end of this year. He said the four Farmington hopefuls are among 30 applicants statewide.

But there are no guarantees. "They (LCC) can do anything they want," Lauhoff said. "That's the problem."

All of the applicants recently had their restaurants inspected by the Farmington Public Safety Department.

"The purpose of the act (440) is to help develop the downtown areas of cities like Farmington," said Public Safety Director Gary Goss. "They narrowed the usage to restaurants... It's really nothing more than to improve their service."

Goss added that he didn't think adding four Class C licenses to the downtown would be a major public safety problem, largely because customers would be eating meals along with the alcohol.

Enabling downtown restaurants to serve alcohol with meals should help bring in customers who currently opt to dine elsewhere, Lauhoff said.

"This is entertainment to many people today," Lauhoff said. "Eating out and then enjoying a walk in the area, or shopping in the area. This is what that enhances, the entertainment a downtown can provide to customers."

Looking at the long-term impact of new Class C licenses, Lauhoff said businesses would have more of a chance to grow and be flexible enough to meet changing times, rather than be forced to close.

The Belcastros said they currently have a solid enough customer base that the restaurant can remain open even without serving beer or wine. But they'd like their chances of long-term success better with a Class C license in hand. "Our chances are like anybody else's," said Domenico Belcastro. "Farmington is looking at the long-range future... how to better the city."

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