

Hills residents vow to picket Oriental spa

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By Joanne Mallazowski
staff writer

Just when Sharon Chilson and other Citizens for a Decent Community supporters thought they could put away their picket signs, they're back in business with last week's reopening of the Tokyo Oriental Health Spa on Orchard Lake Road.

"We'll be there every Saturday again until they're gone," said Chilson, president of the grass-roots organization opposed to alleged prostitution at five Oriental spas raided by Farmington Hills police in October.

After being shut down for four days, Tokyo Spa — the last of five Oriental spas that closed following the police raids — reopened March 14. The spa was closed March 10, the same day the much-debated Farmington Hills massage regulation ordinance went into effect.

Following a meeting last week with the spa owner's attorney, Lee Klein of Southfield, city attorney Paul Bibeau allowed Tokyo spa, 28841 Orchard Lake, to reopen, although the establishment is operating without a business license.

City attorneys sent the Tokyo operators a letter March 6 informing them the city clerk would not issue a 1986 business license. Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer said earlier.

TOKYO, LIKE Keiko Oriental Health Spa, 29513 Nine Mile, was closed following the no-contest pleas of female employees arrested during the Farmington Hills police raids of five Oriental spas on Oct. 7-8. Osaka Oriental Health Spa, 38449 10 Mile, closed almost immediately following police raids. Kim's Spa, 30323 Nine Mile, and Sun Health Spa, 29402 Orchard Lake, also closed, Dwyer said.

Although Bibeau said last week that Klein asked for a hearing under the city's business licensing ordinance, Klein disagreed in part.

"They are now considering giving a hearing. But there is nothing in the ordinance (that calls for it)," Klein said. "If they are willing, I would request one. But I saw nothing in the city ordinance."

City ordinance calls for a hearing when a business license is revoked. Klein said. The ordinance doesn't refer to hearings when city officials refuse to renew a license. Yet Klein said he is waiting to hear from city officials on the status of a hearing for the spa.

When the owner of the Tokyo spa attempted to pay the business license fee in December as the existing license was about to expire, city officials told the owner that the "matter was put on hold," Klein said.

"TO REVOKE or to refuse to issue a business permit under these circumstances (the arrest and subsequent no-contest pleas of some of the spa's employees) was an unconstitutional deprivation of my client's business rights."

If an employee of a drugstore or grocery store is arrested, the business is not shut down and refused a business license, Klein said. The same should hold true with the Tokyo spa, he added.

"They (city attorneys) apparently thought my position was correct," Klein said, referring to the spa's reopening and the possibility of a hearing similar to the type given when a license is revoked. Klein said he was assured no arrests or closing would take place while city officials decide whether a hearing should be scheduled.

Klein said his client is "not ready to concede that there was anything illegal going on. If these ladies were doing anything, it was without consent. My client's position is that they don't condone that activity. They have terminated ladies in the past for suspecting something illegal was occurring."

TIE MEETING with the city attorney, Klein said, was simply an attempt to protect his client's "constitutional procedural due rights." The spa should not be automatically closed because

employees were arrested and entered no-contest pleas in court. "Give us appropriate due process," he said. But Chilson and her group don't necessarily agree.

Citizens for a Decent Community sent Farmington Hills Mayor Joe Alkateeb a letter — read at Monday's council meeting — questioning why Bibeau was permitted to reopen the spa without notifying anyone, including the Farmington Hills Police Department.

"It seems like they were almost undermining the police department," Chilson said.

When asked about the spa's reopening last week, Dwyer refused to comment, deferring all questions to Bibeau.

Although Alkateeb read Chilson's letter at the council meeting Monday, her questions did not prompt discussion.

"I believe Mr. Bibeau acted properly and that's my answer," Alkateeb responded. Yet when asked later about Bibeau's failure to inform police of the spa's reopening, Alkateeb said he talked to the attorney about the matter.



Citizens for a Decent Community members picket the Tokyo Oriental Health Spa on Orchard Lake Road Saturday afternoon.

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Published every Monday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. Second-class postage paid at Livonia, MI 48151. Address all mail (subscription, change of address, Form 3589) to P.O. Box 2428, Livonia, MI 48151. Telephone 581-6500.

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