

**DOWNERS GROVE LIQUOR COMMISSION
VILLAGE HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
801 BURLINGTON AVENUE**

Thursday, September 6, 2018

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Strelau called the September 6, 2018 Liquor Commission meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mr. Clary, Mr. Krusenoski, Ms. Pietrucha, Chairman Strelau

ABSENT: Ms. Flanagan, Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Toerpe

STAFF: Carol Kuchynka, Liaison to the Liquor Commission, Village Attorney Enza Petrarca

OTHERS: Al Lotfi, Court Reporter

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Strelau asked for approval of the minutes for the August 2, 2018 Liquor Commission meeting and asked members if there were any corrections, changes or additions.

Hearing no changes, corrections or additions, the August 2, 2018 minutes of the Liquor Commission meeting were approved as written.

Chairman Strelau reminded those present that this evening's meeting was being recorded on Village-owned equipment. Staff was present to keep minutes for the record and a court reporter was present taking the minutes verbatim.

IV. APPLICATION FOR LIQUOR LICENSE

Chairman Strelau made the following statements:

"The next order of business is to conduct a public hearing for a liquor license application. For the benefit of all present, I would like to state that this Commission does not determine the granting or denial of the issuance of any license. We may at the end of each hearing, make a finding or recommendation with respect to the application. If necessary, the Commission may adjourn a hearing to a later date in order to have benefit of further information."

"At the conclusion of the hearing, the Commission will summarize its findings and determine any recommendations it wishes to make to the Liquor Commissioner."

"The Liquor Commissioner, who is the Mayor of Downers Grove, will, pursuant to Section 3-12 of the Ordinance, render decisions regarding issuance of available liquor licenses within 60 days."

"Hearings by this Commission are held according to the following format: 1) reading of information pertinent to the application, 2) comments from the applicant, 3) discussion by the Commission, 4) comments from staff, 5) comments from the public, and 6) motion and finding by the Commission."

Casa Margarita - 1341 Butterfield Road

Chairman Strelau stated that the first order of business was an application hearing for Margarita Lime, Inc. d/b/a Casa Margarita located at 1341 Butterfield Road. She stated that the applicant was seeking a Class "R-1", full alcohol, on-premise consumption liquor license and an Class "O" full alcohol outdoor liquor license.

Chairman Strelau asked that any individual(s) representing the applicant step forward and be seated. She asked that any individual(s) giving testimony, state and spell their name for the record, indicate their affiliation with the establishment and be sworn in by the court reporter.

Mr. Al Lotfi was sworn in by the court reporter. He introduced himself as the owner of Casa Margarita.

Chairman Strelau asked the applicant to present its case.

Mr. Lotfi stated that he was seeking a full, on-premise consumption liquor license . He stated that he owns and operates six full-service restaurants and has been in business since 1994. He stated that there are 5 Casa Margarita restaurants and advised the business has been growing well. He stated that the Downers Grove location was a good opportunity for him and noted it was close to his residence in OakBrook.

Chairman Strelau asked for comments from the Commission.

Mr. Krusenoski stated that he was comfortable with this applicants and his experience running five other locations and that he was familiar with liquor handling.

Mr. Krusenoski stated that he reviewed the manual and did not see reference on whether they will or will not accept the IL vertical identification. Ms. Kuchynka stated she discussed the matter prior to the hearing and it should have been added to the manual. Chairman Strelau asked what page the provision was on. Mr. Lotfi agreed that they would not accept the vertical id. Ms. Kuchynka stated that she could not find it at this time, but would be sure that provision would be added to the manual.

Mr. Lotfi stated that they take carding very seriously. He advised that they meet with staff quarterly. He stated that they have a policy to card anyone who appears under 40 years old.

Mr. Krusenoski asked if they will retain any of the former Barbakoa staff. Mr. Lotfi replied that some may come back but would have to reapply for a position with his company.

Ms. Pietrucha stated that she has dined at the Hinsdale Casa Margarita location and welcomed Mr. Lotfi to Downers Grove. She noted that they have entered into a twenty year lease. Mr. Lotfi advised that he purchased the property and leased the space to Margarita Lime, Inc.

Ms. Pietrucha stated that violations are taken very seriously. She asked Mr. Lotfi if he had any liquor violations at any of his establishments. Mr. Lotfi replied no. He advised that they regularly get tested in LaGrange.

Ms. Pietrucha asked what cocktail is their primary liquor sales Mr. Lotfi replied margaritas are their biggest seller.

Ms. Pietrucha asked if they have problems with minors attempting liquor purchases. Mr. Lotfi replied no. He added that they cater to customers 30 years of age and older. He stated that since they are a full service restaurant and not a bar, they rarely deal with minors.

Ms. Pietrucha was familiar with the Barbakoa layout and asked if it will remain the same. Mr. Lotfi replied yes. He stated that they plan to do some cosmetic work and painting.

Ms. Pietrucha asked about the outdoor dining areas and noted that there were two. Mr. Lotfi replied that there is an outdoor seating area at the front entrance and on the east side of the building.

Ms. Pietrucha asked where the bar is located from the entrance. Mr. Lotfi replied that the bar area is to the left of the entrance. Ms. Pietrucha asked about the side room depicted on the plan. Mr. Lotfi replied that there is a banquet/party room in the right corner of the restaurant

Mr. Clary stated that they have an impressive menu. He asked Mr. Lotfi if they have outdoor cafes in their other locations. Mr. Lotfi replied yes. He stated that they have sidewalk cafes in LaGrange, Orland Park and in Chicago. He stated that the Bolingbrook location has a side outdoor café.

Mr. Clary asked how guests are monitored in the café. Mr. Lotfi replied that guests must be seated by the host or hostess and they have servers in the area to monitor.

Mr. Clary encouraged Mr. Lotfi to keep his good record with no violations.

Chairman Strelau noted the number of locations Mr. Lotfi owns and asked how much time he will spend at the Downers Grove location. Mr. Lotfi replied that he will spend most of his time in Downers Grove as he picked this location which is close to his residence in OakBrook.

Chairman Strelau asked who will oversee the establishment when he is not there. Mr. Lotfi replied that he has several managers and stated that his son also helps him run the businesses.

Chairman Strelau asked Mr. Lotfi if he plans to hire under 21 servers. Mr. Lotfi replied that he intends on hiring those over 21 as Downers Grove requires that carding must be done by those over 21. He stated that other staff such as a host/hostesses or busboy may be under 21.

Chairman Strelau advised Mr. Lotfi that they will be tested and noted that staff should understand the importance of proper liquor service.

Chairman Strelau noted that LaGrange has tested them. Mr. Lotfi replied yes. He stated that they have come in, passed and the bartender gets congratulated. Chairman Strelau advised that Downers Grove conducts similar tests. She encouraged him to be certain staff understands the importance of not serving under 21 year olds or accept the vertical licenses.

Chairman Strelau asked staff for recommendations or comments pertinent to this application. Ms. Kuchynka replied that issuance of the license is contingent upon receipt of satisfactory background checks, insurance, the annual fee, Certificate of Occupancy and employee certifications.

Chairman Strelau asked Mr. Lotfi when they planned to open. Mr. Lotfi replied as soon as possible or by the beginning of October.

Ms. Pietrucha asked if they will offer Uber Eats. Mr. Lotfi replied yes, as they do at all of their locations. He stated that they use Grub Hub and Door Dash. He stated that they do a lot of delivery business.

Chairman Strelau asked for comments from the public. There were none.

Hearing the testimony given in this case, Chairman Strelau asked for a recommendation from the Commission concerning its finding of "qualified" or "not qualified" with respect to the applicant with regard to their Class "R-1" liquor license application.

MR. KRUSENOSKI MOVED TO FIND MARGARITA LIME, INC. D/B/A CASA MARGARITA, LOCATED AT 1341 BUTTERFIELD ROAD, QUALIFIED FOR A CLASS "R-1" LIQUOR LICENSE. MR. CLARY SECONDED.

VOTE: **Aye:** Mr. Krusenoski, Mr. Clary, Ms. Pietrucha, Chairman Strelau
 Nay: None
 Abstain: None

MOTION CARRIED: 4:0:0

Hearing the testimony given in this case, Chairman Strelau asked for a recommendation from the Commission concerning its finding of "qualified" or "not qualified" with respect to the applicant with regard to their Class "O" liquor license application.

MR. CLARY MOVED TO FIND MARGARITA LIME, INC. D/B/A CASA MARGARITA, LOCATED AT 1341 BUTTERFIELD ROAD, QUALIFIED FOR A CLASS "O" LIQUOR LICENSE. MR. KRUSENOSKI SECONDED.

VOTE: **Aye:** Mr. Clary, Mr. Krusenoski, Ms. Pietrucha, Chairman Strelau
 Nay: None
 Abstain: None

MOTION CARRIED: 4:0:0

Motion carried.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Strelau asked if there was any discussion, update from staff or comments from the Commission regarding any new business.

Ms. Kuchynka discussed the month end reports. She stated was unsure if there would be an October 4th meeting.

Attorney Petrarca advised that the Village Council considered eliminating the Class E, entertainment license, at the Council workshop of August 21st.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Strelau asked if there was any discussion, update from staff or comments from the Commission regarding any old business.

Ms. Kuchynka advised of the Mayor's intent to issue the license for Grand Duke's, City Barbecue and ALDI. She advised that City Barbecue was up and running and expected to issue ALDI and Grand Duke's on November 1st.

Mr. Krusenoski asked if Pierce Tavern was open. Ms. Kuchynka replied that they will be open to the general public on September 10th. Mr. Krusenoski noted that the restaurant was hosting friends and family by invitation to their soft opening this week.

VII. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were none.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Concluding business for the evening, Chairman Strelau called for a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Flanagan moved to adjourn the September 6, 2018 meeting. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 6:50 p.m.