

**DOWNERS GROVE LIQUOR COMMISSION**  
**VILLAGE HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**801 BURLINGTON AVENUE**  
Thursday, January 5, 2023

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Strelau called the January 5, 2023 Liquor Commission meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Mr. Fenton, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Kastory, Mr. Mehta, Ms. Rutledge, Mr. Shah, Chairman Strelau

**ABSENT:** None

**STAFF:** Carol Kuchynka, Liaison to the Liquor Commission, Assistant Village Attorney Dawn Didier

**OTHERS:** Alina Patrascu, Ion Roga, Court Reporter

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chairman Strelau asked for approval of the minutes for the November 3, 2022 Liquor Commission meeting and asked members if there were any corrections, changes or additions.

Let the record reflect spelling corrections of Commission member names. Hearing said corrections, the November 3, 2022 minutes of the Liquor Commission meeting were approved as amended.

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.

**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 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 licenses."

"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."

**Maestro Restaurant & Traditional Cuisine – 1202 K-L 75<sup>th</sup> Street**

Chairman Strelau stated that the next order of business was Maestro Cuisine, Inc. d/b/a Maestro Restaurant & Traditional Cuisine located at 1212 K-L 75<sup>th</sup> Street. She stated that the applicant is seeking a Class “R-1”, full alcohol, on-premise consumption 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.

Ms. Alina Patrascu and Mr. Ion Roga were sworn in by the court reporter. Ms. Patrascu stated that the correct address for the location is 1202 75<sup>th</sup> Street.

Chairman Strelau asked the applicant to explain what they are about.

Ms. Patrascu stated that they are new to the restaurant business. She stated that she will be the operating manager. She added that she would be speaking on behalf of the owner, Mr. Roga, as his English is good, however, may have trouble expressing himself.

Ms. Patrascu stated that they are opening a Moldavian restaurant. She stated that Moldova is a small country near Romania, Ukraine and Russia. She stated that they have delicious food and plan to offer tasty wine from the region. She stated that there is a large Moldavian community in the area. She stated that there are a few banquet halls that offer this type of cuisine but there are no restaurants in the area where one can go to have a Moldavian meal. She stated that they would like to serve liquor and traditional wine which will be imported from Moldova.

Chairman Strelau asked if the restaurant was in the strip mall across from Burger King. Ms. Patrascu replied they are in the plaza near the UPS Store. Ms. Kuchynka stated that they are around the corner from Wags in the strip mall on the southwest corner of 75<sup>th</sup> & Lemont which is adjacent to the White Castle.

Chairman Strelau asked for questions from the Commission.

Mr. Mehta asked Ms. Patrascu about her liquor serving background. Ms. Patrascu replied that she worked as a bartender/bar manager for three years while living in Virginia.

Mr. Mehta asked about the staff’s liquor serving experience. Ms. Patrascu replied that they have only one employee now. She stated that the space is small and noted that they cannot afford to hire a lot of people as of now. She stated that her employee has liquor handling experience from Italy. She stated that she will be responsible for training him and all new employees once hired.

Mr. Mehta stated that the Commission will want to be certain that employees are properly trained. Ms. Patrascu stated that all employees will get the mandatory BASSETT training and be trained personally by her.

Mr. Shah asked if they have gone through the BASSET Certified Training. She stated that her and Ion have received their certifications.

Mr. Shah asked Ms. Patrascu how many years of experience she has. Ms. Patrascu replied that she has worked in the restaurant business for five years but bartended/managed for three years. She stated that customer service is her passion.

Mr. Shah asked Mr. Roga about his experience. Mr. Roga replied he has no liquor experience but he has culinary experience.

Ms. Patrascu stated that Mr. Roga has been organizing a yearly festival “My Heart is Moldova”, where they serve alcohol. She stated that they have obtained permits to serve food and alcohol. She noted he has some experience. Mr. Roga replied the fest has occurred for the past five years. Chairman Strelau asked where the festival is held. Mr. Roga replied at Vasa Park in South Elgin. Ms. Patrascu stated that artists come, they serve food and beverages which occurs at the end of August. Mr. Roga noted 3-4,000 people attend.

Ms. Kastory had no questions.

Mr. Fenton had no questions. He looked forward to their opening.

Ms. Rutledge asked the reason why they were getting into the restaurant business. Ms. Patrascu stated that they have been long time friends and she volunteered to help him with the startup. She added that Ion is an incredible cook. She added that Ion was a truck driver, however, his talent of cooking and encouragement from his friends has led him to follow his passion and open a restaurant. She stated he has been encouraged to share his talent for cooking Moldavan foods with the community.

Mr. Johnson asked if it is their intention to grow. He noted that their manual indicated they would hold monthly meetings to discuss alcohol policy but recommended that they discuss these things more frequently. Ms. Patrascu replied when she worked in the industry it was done weekly. She felt that weekly meetings were a good policy to follow and added that she would discuss matters more frequently.

Chairman Strelau asked Ms. Patrascu when they plan to open. Ms. Patrascu replied it would depend upon receipt of the licenses and health department approval.

Chairman Strelau asked Ms. Patrascu to explain the floor plan. She understands they now only have one person hired and asked how they plan to staff the restaurant and the banquet facility. Ms. Patrascu replied that the banquet area has five tables, with 50-70 maximum in that area. She stated that they plan to hire as they go. She stated that she does not plan to host banquets in the next 3-5 months, as they are fairly new and will mainly be operating the dining area. She stated they will hire on more as their customer base increases.

Chairman Strelau stated that they need to be cautious as customers may want to take advantage of the banquet facility and they may struggle to get employees. She advised them not to cut corners and make sure they hire enough staff and train them well. She stated that their whole dream can be damaged by liquor problems.

Chairman Strelau stated that this is a good restaurant to bring to Downers Grove. She stated since they are new there is some concern. Ms. Patrascu stated that all hires will be trained by her. She stated that her background in the restaurant field will help and noted the BASSETT course was also helpful.

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

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 their request for a Class R-1 liquor license.

**MR. JOHNSON MOVED TO FIND MAESTRO CUISINE, INC. D/B/A MAESTRO RESTAURANT & TRADITIONAL CUISINE LOCATED AT 1202 K-L 75<sup>TH</sup> STREET QUALIFIED FOR A CLASS "R-1", FULL ALCOHOL, ON-PREMISE CONSUMPTION LIQUOR LICENSE. MS. RUTLEDGE SECONDED.**

**Aye:** Mr. Johnson, Ms. Rutledge, Mr. Fenton, Ms. Kastory, Mr. Mehta, Mr. Shah, Chairman Strelau

**Nay:** None

**Abstain:** None

**MOTION CARRIED: 7:0:0**

## **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 stated that she had no new business. She was uncertain if there would be a February meeting. Chairman Strelau stated that part of her discussion with the Mayor before this evening's meeting was concerning a recent violation. Ms. Kuchynka replied that she would consult with the Village Attorney and get back to the Commission about whether there would be a meeting.

Ms. Kuchynka notified the Commission that this was Ms. Didier's last meeting. Ms. Didier stated that she has taken the position of City Attorney for the City of Wheaton. The group congratulated her.

## **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 referred to the November month end report. She stated that she included the Mayor's findings and order for BP Amoco and 7-Eleven which contained information on their violation fines and penalties. She stated that the report also included a revised liquor classification chart with updates to the number of current licensees who renewed for the 2022-2023 license year.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that the December month end report contained an updated liquor classification chart with revised fees for 2023. She noted that on January 1<sup>st</sup>, Village-wide updates are made to the User Fee, License & Fine Schedule administrative regulation.

## **VII. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were none.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Concluding business for the evening, Chairman Strelau called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Johnson moved to adjourn the January 5, 2023 meeting. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 7:05 p.m.