

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

Thursday, March 3, 2016

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Strelau called the March 3, 2016 Liquor Commission meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Mr. Austin, Mr. Clary, Ms. Fregeau, Ms. King, Chairman Strelau

**ABSENT:** Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Krusenoski

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

**OTHERS:** John Kwok, May Tung, Dino Vulpitta, Brian Krajewski, Court Reporter

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chairman Strelau asked for approval of the minutes for the October 1, 2015 Liquor Commission meeting and asked members if there were any corrections, changes or additions.

Ms. Fregeau noted a discrepancy on pages 4-5 of the minutes concerning happy hour regulations. She asked if the State allows a happy hour for 3 or 4 hours. Ms. Didier replied that the State Statute reads four hours and the minutes would be reflected to reference the correct hours. Hearing no further changes, corrections or additions, the October 1, 2015 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 first 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) comments from the public, 4) discussion by the Commission, and 5) motion and finding by the Commission."

*The Olive Theory - 1400 A Butterfield Road*

Chairman Strelau stated that the next order of business was an application hearing for Piedemic Pizzeria, LLC d/b/a The Olive Theory Pizzeria located at 1400 A Butterfield Road. She stated that the applicant was seeking a Class "R-2", beer and wine, 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.

Mr. John Kwok and Ms. May Tung were sworn in by the court reporter. Mr. Bentley introduced himself as the liquor manager of The Olive Theory Pizzeria and Ms. Tung introduced herself as the owner of The Olive Theory Pizzeria.

Chairman Strelau asked the applicant to present its case.

Mr. Kwok stated that the pizzeria is currently in operation and noted they are seeking a liquor license based on a number of patron requests for beer and wine.

Ms. King asked where the restaurant was located. Mr. Kwok replied in the strip mall on Butterfield near the Best Buy.

Ms. King asked how many employees will serve alcohol. Mr. Kwok replied 2-3 and noted that all will be certified. Ms. King noted his liquor manager application and that he has no liquor handling experience.

Mr. Austin expressed his concern for Mr. Kwok's lack of liquor handling experience. Mr. Kwok replied that another current employee has liquor handling experience and is also certified. He stated that The Olive Theory is a family run business and his mother has 23 years of restaurant experience and that he has been managing the business for a number of years.

Mr. Austin noted that Mr. Kwok will be the responsible manager on-site and that serving liquor is a challenge. He asked Mr. Kwok what the biggest challenge is for him to run the business. Mr. Kwok replied communication. He stated that some staff are under 21, but all will be required to read the liquor handling policy so they are familiar with their rules. He wanted to be sure that everyone can recognize signs of intoxication and that all employees know if a guest behavior needs to be handled.

Mr. Austin asked how alcohol is served. Mr. Kwok replied that the pizzeria operates similar to the Chipotle style fast food service. He stated that customers will place their food order at the first counter and then order drinks from a second counter. He stated that a manager will take orders for beer and wine.

Mr. Austin asked if there is a POS system at the drink register. Mr. Kwok replied there is no coding in place for alcohol and that it is a basic register system. He stated that there were security cameras on the register and throughout the establishment. He stated that if an alcoholic beverage is ordered a manager on duty will be called over to ring up the sale.

Ms. Fregeau stated they must be responsible servers of alcohol She stated that management sets the tone and tenor about the importance of proper liquor service and noted that communication with staff is key.

Ms. Fregeau asked at what age employees will ask to see identification. Mr. Kwok replied that anyone who appears under 30 will be asked for an id.

Mr. Clary asked about liquor purchased. Mr. Kwok replied that the customer will be asked for identification each time an alcoholic beverage is ordered. He stated that customers are allowed to buy one drink at a time. Mr. Clary advised them to be certain that someone over 21 is available at the register to ring up the sale.

Chairman Strelau asked Mr. Kwok how often they meet with staff to discuss policy. Mr. Kwok replied that he meets every day prior to scheduled shifts and that they have frequent communication with staff. Chairman Strelau suggested that they hold regular meetings to discuss liquor issues in addition to the pre-shift discussions.

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 the annual fee and employee certification. She stated that satisfactory background checks on the liquor manager and owner have been received.

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-2" liquor license application.

**MS. FREGEAU MOVED TO FIND PIEDEMIC PIZZERIA, LLC D/B/A THE OLIVE THEORY PIZZERIA LOCATED AT 1400 A BUTTERFIELD ROAD QUALIFIED FOR A CLASS "R-2", BEER AND WINE, ON-PREMISE CONSUMPTION LIQUOR LICENSE. MR. CLARY SECONDED.**

**VOTE:**           **Aye:**           Ms. Fregeau, Mr. Clary, Mr. Austin, Ms. King, Chairman Strelau

**Nay:**           None

**Abstain:**       None

**MOTION CARRIED: 5:0:0**

Motion carried.

Ms. Kuchynka requested that New Business precede Old Business on the agenda in order to accommodate Karma Club representatives.

## **V.       NEW BUSINESS**

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

*Karma Club - 1211 A Butterfield Road*

Ms. Kuchynka stated that representatives for Downers Grove Entertainment, LLC d/b/a Karma Club, located at 1211A Butterfield Road were present to discuss floor plan changes, updated menu and amendments to their operation. She stated that she forwarded the Commission materials that were presented during the June, 2015 Karma Club application hearing. She noted that the floor plan was amended prior to the club's opening in December of 2015, indicating the removal of the mechanical bull, the closing off of the whiskey bar area and the closure of the room in the southeast corner of the facility. She stated that the Commission will be looking at new plans for the establishment and hear operational changes from the licensee who is present to answer any other questions the Commission may have.

Mr. Dino Vulpitta and Mr. Brian Krajewski were sworn in by the court reporter.

Mr. Vulpitta stated that he recently joined the Karma group. He stated that he is the owner/operator of Brando's Speakeasy in the City of Chicago. He stated that he would like to focus more on food, entertainment, ballroom dancing, trivia nights, neo-vintage and throwback parties, brunches and karaoke and make Karma less of a dance club. He stated that he brought in Chef Rich Mancini to expand on the menu and pop-up dinner parties.

Mr. Vulpitta stated that there is an existing room which was not being utilized and they would like to call it the Brando's Room, where patrons can get away from the dance floor, enjoy quieter music and dine.

Mr. Krajewski stated that Dino will be the new liquor manager for the establishment. He stated that Mr. Wilkie will also remain at the facility, but Dino will handle the day-to-day operation.

Mr. Krajewski advised that Dino will also be brought in as 35% part owner of the club.

Ms. Kuchynka advised that a Liquor Manager Application and a Partnership Application has been filed with the Village for the change in manager and addition of Mr. Vulpitta as a stockholder.

Mr. Krajewski advised that with the addition of Chef Mancini, they plan to offer more food and hope to do some catering events for local businesses.

Ms. Fregeau noted her concerns about the Karma website, their Facebook page and the most recent Suburban Life article that references bottle service. Mr. Vulpitta replied that the newspaper article was not supposed to be released until approvals were received. He stated that he addressed wine pairings with food and the newspaper referred to that as "bottle service". He stated that he was misrepresented and that he has been made aware that Downers Grove does not allow happy hour and will follow local rules.

Ms. Fregeau noticed comments on the site that patrons ordered Finlandia Vodka and got Skyy Vodka instead and asked if there had been hard liquor being served by the bottle. Mr. Vulpitta replied not to his knowledge and guaranteed that would not happen again under his management. He stated that they had some items on Facebook that were removed from the site and references to "free" bottles of champagne and noted that those postings shall stop.

Mr. Krajewski stated that they discussed the possibility of a group table having their own mini bar and bartender serving a bottle. Ms. Fregeau asked what the bottle being served was. Mr. Krajewski replied a bottle of whatever the table wants. Ms. Fregeau stated that was bottle service. Mr. Krajewski stated that the bartender would be the only one allowed to serve/pour drinks. Mr. Vulpitta added they are rolling

carts for mixologists. Mr. Vulpitta stated that he would work out specifics and make sure they follow local liquor laws and would ask for approval of the concept and bring it back to the Commission.

Ms. Fregeau stated that at the original hearing Mr. Willkie was asked if Karma was going to be another nightclub and the Commission was told it was going to have an upscale, country western theme with a 25-35 year old clientele. Mr. Vulpitta replied he would like to have even an older clientele.

Ms. Fregeau asked Mr. Vulpitta if they had planned any changes to the manual. Ms. Kuchynka noted that they will need to update their hours of operation.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that bottle service is not allowed. She stated that mixologists may utilize a rolling cart and/or serve a group of people at a table, however they will be required to charge per drink. She stated that management can add specifics of that activity in the liquor manual as part of their update.

Ms. Fregeau asked Mr. Vulpitta if there were plans to update the staff's dress code policy. Mr. Vulpitta replied that he would like staff to dress neo-vintage and that floor staff will have shirts that distinguish themselves as security. He added that they have a strict dress code for patrons. Ms. Fregeau stated she addressed the dress code policy because there were pictures online of bartenders that appeared to be in lingerie and it was clear they are not following the dress code. Ms. Fregeau was looking for consistency with the manual and adherence to the Liquor Ordinance about staff and/or performer's dress.

Mr. Vulpitta stated that he bought Brando's back in 2007 and they have a nice after work crowd. He stated that he opted to join Karma as the same opportunity is here. He noted he wants to make the space an event center and do great things.

Ms. Fregeau noted that it is a big space to manage and asked Mr. Vulpitta if he will spend more time in Downers Grove or in Chicago. Mr. Vulpitta responded that he has a manager running the Chicago location and will concentrate on the Downers Grove location.

Ms. Fregeau asked if they were keeping on the same staff. Mr. Vulpitta replied that he has changed almost all the bartenders and made some changes to the security staff.

Ms. Fregeau referred to the bartender, Leonidas, and his comments on Facebook "so I'll be making drinks, pouring shots and getting people intoxicated tonight". She stated that management sets the tone and tenor of the establishment and they need to be aware of messages their employees are posting and getting people drunk is not what they need promoted. She stated that in social media people will say and do anything but if they are making a comment about the business it is a reflection on it. Mr. Vulpitta agreed. He stated that the whole purpose to go into Karma is to have fun, not get drunk.

Mr. Vulpitta stated that he was going to work hard to make it a destination for karaoke. He stated that the music is top 100, with some country and they will do 80's, 90s and a little bit of everything. Ms. Fregeau appreciated that he was working on making a successful business and was just noting her concerns about what is happening on-line.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that she contacted the Police Department and stated that there have not been any disturbances at the location other than a verbal domestic which did not involve the facility.

Mr. Clary stated that he had the same concerns as Ms. Fregeau. He asked how long Mr. Vulpitta has been a partner. Mr. Vulpitta replied four weeks ago. Mr. Krajewski stated that Mr. Vulpitta was in the

process of getting on the LLC and he filled out the liquor manager and partnership paperwork with the Village.

Mr. Clary stated he was disturbed by the number of times "bottle service" has been observed. Mr. Vulpitta replied that would be stopped. He stated that it is a hassle selling a bottle as one person can drink three-quarters of it and another one-quarter and he would rather have control over the amount someone is drinking.

Mr. Vulpitta stated that he will re-brand the establishment and will rely on their own promotion team. He stated that he will personally guarantee that bottle service will not happen again and plans to be proactive not reactive against this happening again.

Mr. Clary asked Mr. Vulpitta if there were any violations at the Brando's downtown. Mr. Vulpitta replied two.

Mr. Austin asked if the LLC changes were in the process. Mr. Vulpitta replied yes. Mr. Krajewski stated that the paperwork has been signed and they have to finalize with the Secretary of State.

Mr. Austin asked who is currently serving as manager. Mr. Vulpitta replied Mike Wilkie.

Mr. Austin asked who was serving as the manager of the LLC. Mr. Vulpitta replied Narain and that he was in the process of being added as an investor to the LLC. Mr. Austin asked if there are others they plan on bringing in. Mr. Vulpitta replied Narain is interested in bringing in others.

Mr. Austin stated that Mr. Vulpitta has good ideas, however, is only a minority owner and questions if the changes proposed are going to happen. Mr. Vulpitta stated that Narain asked him to take over and that they have a management deal in that he will control what happens at Karma.

Mr. Austin asked if they have a contract with Rich Mancini. Mr. Vulpitta replied yes and noted he was a good friend of his. He stated that there will be expanded menu items and he plans for pop-up dinners with an evolving menu.

Mr. Austin asked staff about where the facility is going with regard to being an entertainment facility. Ms. Kuchynka replied that they still will offer such things as dancing and karaoke versus operating as a restaurant. Mr. Austin noted that some other establishments offer karaoke, live bands and dancing and wondered why that differed. Ms. Didier noted that an area is devoted to live entertainment and dancing and is limited to those 21 and over. Mr. Austin questioned if they will be a recreational license any longer and noted that some of the dance floor will now be devoted to couch-style seating. Chairman Strelau noted it could work to change their license class designation, however, the Commission should proceed with what they are presenting tonight.

Mr. Austin asked how they plan to have the couch seating area work out. Mr. Vulpitta replied he wanted to have more areas to eat. Mr. Austin asked if it would remain more of a club atmosphere. Mr. Vulpitta replied yes and that he still wanted dancing. He stated that it was a huge facility to fill and he wanted to have areas where people could sit and watch tv too without if feeling cold and empty.

Mr. Austin asked if they are planning to utilize the outdoor patio areas as well. Mr. Vulpitta replied yes. He stated that he plans to re-design it a bit to feel more like the interior and replace the tables and chairs with some nicer furniture and have music playing out there.

Ms. King asked Mr. Vulpitta if he plans to meet frequently with staff. Mr. Vulpitta replied that he would meet with main management once a week. He stated that he will meet with staff immediately to discuss what is going on with social media. He stated that they will have protocol and conduct themselves in a proper way. Ms. Fregeau suggested that they control their own marketing.

Ms. King asked Mr. Vulpitta what brought him to this particular establishment. Mr. Vulpitta replied that Narain frequented Brando's and wanted to put Brando's into this establishment.

Mr. Vulpitta stated that he does not want Karma to be just a dance club. He noted that dance clubs are on their way down as people want to have more to do at any location.

Chairman Strelau asked staff if Mr. Vulpitta has completed all the necessary paperwork for the liquor license. Ms. Kuchynka replied yes. Chairman Strelau asked if the paperwork shows Mr. Vulpitta as owning 35% in stock. Ms. Kuchynka replied yes. Mr. Vulpitta noted that the LLC paperwork is in the process.

Chairman Strelau asked if the hours of operation were changing. Mr. Vulpitta replied yes. He stated that he would like to open daily at 3:00 p.m., six or seven days a week.

Chairman Strelau asked what he envisioned at the club in the evening. Mr. Vulpitta replied that he would like to reach out to the after work hours crowd, would like karaoke in the Brando room and staff serving food and drink.

Chairman Strelau asked about closing hours. Mr. Vulpitta replied until 2am daily and until 3am on Saturday.

Chairman Strelau stated that the Commission has heard many different tales for the same floor space, which are all interesting, however they need to have their policies and security plans in place as they will be held accountable if there are problems. Mr. Vulpitta agreed.

Chairman Strelau advised Mr. Vulpitta to contact Carol if he has any questions about local ordinances and regulations. She stated that the Commission has expressed its concerns and given boundaries so that they can go back and work on the facility.

Ms. Fregeau asked if the seating layout in the main room is what exists currently on the plan. Mr. Vulpitta replied yes.

Mr. Vulpitta stated that he has been in the business for 8 years and looks at this opportunity as a challenge and does not want to be back before the Commission other than for expanding.

Ms. Fregeau asked for clarification. She stated that the newspaper article led readers to believe that Brando's was a separate restaurant next to Karma Club. Mr. Vulpitta replied that it will be known as the Brando's Room at Karma. Ms. Fregeau wanted to ask because the article was misleading and did not know if it was a separate operation that would require another license. Mr. Vulpitta stated that he understood their concerns as he was surprised that the article came out and there were many misquotes. He stated that he would like them to do another article about their vision.

Chairman Strelau asked staff what they need from the Commission concerning this matter. Ms. Didier stated that the ordinance requires a recommendation from the Commission concerning a floor plan

change or focus in operation. She requested a motion from the Commission concerning their proposed changes.

Ms. Kuchynka asked Mr. Vulpitta if the floor plan and menu were correct. Mr. Vulpitta replied yes.

Mr. Austin stated that he was confused as far as the designation of a recreational facility and designation of the entertainment. He stated that they look at what the licensee is asking. Ms. Kuchynka replied that the licensee is not asking for a reclassification. Chairman Strelau asked Mr. Austin what he thought what was not being done that it would not fall into the entertainment license requirement. Mr. Austin stated that the Code defines the E class as an entertainment/recreational facility. Ms. Didier stated that Mr. Austin should not look at the E classification, but the definition of both entertainment and recreational facilities.

Ms. Didier stated that they do not need permission for a menu change. She stated that the theme and floor plan changes should be addressed in the motion.

Hearing the testimony given in this case, Chairman Strelau asked for a recommendation from the Commission concerning its finding regarding the change in floor plan, menu and activities with respect to the licensee and their Class "E" liquor license.

**MS. KING MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF A NEW FLOOR PLAN AND THEME CHANGES FOR DOWNERS GROVE ENTERTAINMENT, LLC D/B/A KARMA CLUB LOCATED AT 1211 A BUTTERFIELD ROAD. MR. CLARY SECONDED.**

**VOTE:**            **Aye:**            Ms. King, Mr. Clary, Mr. Austin, Ms. Fregeau, Chairman Strelau  
                         **Nay:**            None  
                         **Abstain:**        None

**MOTION CARRIED: 5:0:0**

Motion carried.

## **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 stated that Keystone Bar & Grill was re-branded and re-opened as Redhouse. She stated that there were no changes to the floor plan or menu and they opted to close, hire new staff and re-open under a new d/b/a name. She advised the Mayor approved the change administratively.

Ms. Kuchynka advised that she conducted a final walk through at Next Round located at 500 W. 75<sup>th</sup> Street and expected them to open in the near future.

The group discussed the provisions and the status of happy hour regulations in the Village. Ms. Kuchynka stated that Village regulations still exist which prohibit happy hours. She stated that staff attended ILCC meetings and were told regulations were to be established and were waiting for additional updates from the State. Mr. Austin stated that regulations should be clarified with licensees. The group



discussed adopting happy hours to be consistent with State law and draft an ordinance change. Ms. Kuchynka replied that she would discuss the changes with the Mayor and Village Attorney.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that she anticipated an April meeting.

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

There were none.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

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

Mr. Clary moved to adjourn the March 3, 2016 meeting. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 8:07 p.m.

