

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 14, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

FROM: FAROLL HAMER, DIRECTOR *FH*
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

SUBJECT: VASO'S KITCHEN RESTAURANT, 1225 POWHATAN STREET
(SUP#2007-0027)

A request to allow outdoor seating for Vaso's Kitchen was recommended for approval at the June 5, 2007 Planning Commission meeting. At that meeting several residents expressed support for Vaso's Kitchen but raised concerns regarding parking, hours of operation and access. The Planning Commission recommended approval after amending several conditions and directing the applicant to meet with members of the Northeast Citizens Association to discuss neighborhood concerns.

Staff attended a special meeting of the Northeast Citizens Association on Tuesday, June 12. The meeting was attended by approximately 20 citizens as well as three representatives from Vaso's Kitchen. The discussion centered on four main topics, availability of parking, closing hour, smoking and the design of the outdoor seating.

Parking

The competition for parking in the evenings is a concern for neighborhood residents. While the residents are satisfied with the proposed parking plan, they wanted details about where the signs directing customers to off-site parking would be located. The applicants and the citizens agreed that there would be a permanent sign at the entrance to the on-site parking lot and temporary signage in the restaurant informing patrons of the location of off-site parking.

Closing Hour

Residents are concerned with the potential for outdoor dining to disrupt the peace and quiet of the neighborhood. To address this, the Planning Commission imposed a closing

hour of 9:00 p.m. for outdoor dining. The residents wanted clarification that this meant that there would be no one allowed in the outdoor dining area after 9:00 p.m. Although the applicant was under the impression that they would be allowed to serve patrons outside until the closing hour, it was agreed that the outdoor dining would be vacated by 9:00 p.m.

Smoking

The community was divided on the issue of whether smoking should be allowed in the outdoor dining area. The applicant felt that patrons should be allowed to smoke in this area since the restaurant currently does not allow smoking inside. There was discussion about whether to allow smoking along Bashford Lane and Powhatan Street. The residents agreed to follow the City Council's lead and abide by the proposed ordinance on smoking in restaurants.

Design Of Outdoor Seating

The design of the outdoor seating was discussed at great length. While everybody in attendance agreed that the proposed tables and chairs are a visual enhancement to the property, there was debate over the type of barrier to be installed. The applicant has altered the plans that were initially submitted to indicate the use of heavy stanchions and chains to cordon the outdoor patio. Some residents wanted the applicant to be held to the initial proposal of an iron railing. The Planning Commission amended condition #9 to read, "...The design of outdoor seating shall be approved by the director of Planning and Zoning." This allows for a certain amount of flexibility in the design to meet the applicant's and community's needs. The residents agreed that the stanchion and chain design would be acceptable as long as the applicant does not use plastic chains. Concerns were raised that there would not be sufficient access to the sidewalk from the curb cuts at the intersection of Powhatan Street and Bashford Lane. The design approved by Planning and Zoning provides adequate access at this intersection.

Conclusion

Staff feels that the applicant and the community were able to work together to achieve a working plan for a well liked community restaurant. The issues addressed will allow the restaurant to offer a pleasant outdoor dining experience while maintaining a peaceful community atmosphere.