

LICENSE HEARING MINUTES
Turbo Tim's Anything Automotive LLC, 1671 University Avenue West
Thursday, May 5, 2022, 2:00 p.m.
Room 330 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Boulevard West
Nhia Vang, Deputy Legislative Hearing Officer

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 p.m.

Staff Present: Jeff Fischbach, DSI (Department of Safety and Inspections); Racquel Naylor, City Council Offices; Farhan Omar, DSI; Nhia Vang, Deputy Legislative Hearing Officer

Licensee: Turbo Tim's Anything Automotive LLC (License ID# 20220000204), d/b/a Turbo Tim's, located at 1671 University Avenue West, Tim Suggs and Rachel Grewell, co-owners

License Application: Auto Repair Garage

Other(s) in Attendance: Cathy Heying, The Lift Garage, 3612 42nd Avenue South, Minneapolis

License Application: Auto Repair Garage License

Legislative Hearing Officer Nhia Vang made introductory comments about the hearing process for the Auto Repair Garage license: This is an informal legislative hearing for a Class N license application. This license requires neighborhood notification to nearby residents and businesses, including the affected District Council about the application and provide them with an opportunity to submit comments. During the notification period of March 15 to April 15, the City received one letter which triggered the meeting. She will begin with a staff report.

The hearing will proceed as follows: DSI staff will explain their review of the application and state their recommendation. The applicants will be asked to discuss their business plan and how they envision it fitting into the neighborhood. Members of the community will be invited to testify as to whether they object to or support the license application, including reading letters or emails into the record, and the applicants will be given an opportunity to respond to concerns or statements raised. This is an informal process that will be conducted in a respectful and reasonable manner; however, there may be times when interested parties may be interrupted but her intention is to find the relevant pieces to help her make her recommendation.

At the end of the hearing, the Legislative Hearing Officer will develop a recommendation for the City Council to consider. The recommendation will come before the City Council as a resolution on the Consent Agenda. There are three (3) possible recommendations: 1) recommend that the City Council issue the license with no conditions, (2) recommend that the City Council issue the license with agreed upon conditions those that have been recommended by DSI and those

that have been developed during the hearing; and 3) recommend that the City Council not issue this license where conditions are not in agreement, but refer it to the City Attorney's Office to take an adverse action on the application, which could involve review by an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). Referral to an ALJ means that it would go through a separate administrative law process, which can take 3 to 6 months before resolution. The City Council is the final authority on whether the license is approved or denied. Again, the Hearing Officer's recommendation will go to the City Council on their Consent Agenda. [Applicants and interested parties were informed of an agenda packet of the hearing to follow along.]

Jeff Fischbach, licensing Inspector for the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI), gave a staff report for licensee Turbo Tim's Anything Automotive LLC (License ID# 20220000204), d/b/a Turbo Tim's, located at 1671 University Avenue West, said they have applied for an auto repair garage license. DSI has recommended no conditions. Mr. Fischbach stated as far as neighborhood organization recommendation, DSI has received no correspondence from the District Council. Building is not applicable; license is approved with no conditions. Zoning has approved. DSI is recommending the license with no conditions.

Ms. Vang next invited the co-owners to testify and to walk through their business plan, hours of operation, days of the week, number of staff, etc. Rachel Grewell, co-owner, said that they have the same business, their flagship business, in northeast Minneapolis. The business was opened in 2007 with a strong emphasis on community engagement. It is a large facility, and because of their success they have outgrown that location. They explored Saint Paul as another location to expand their business. Because of their interest in community engagement and volunteerism, they reached out to community partners in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood to figure out ways to collaboratively work in the community when they found the University Avenue location. They have a lot of resources to add to the community. The building for this application is large and there is potential for creating a community space. They talked to Hamline Coalition and met with the Director Sarah O'Brien. Unfortunately, Director O'Brien is not able to attend the hearing.

Ms. Grewell also stated that they partnered with Mr. Melvin Giles, a community member in the Rondo neighborhood, through Midway Monitor. Midway Monitor published an article about Turbo Tim's to introduce them to the community, asking for feedback and how they can fit in the neighborhood, and how they can be of service to the neighborhood. They hope to continue a similar model of being community-oriented business that was used at the Minneapolis location. They are also hoping to incorporate a fun and unique way of engaging the community to consider them an asset.

Ms. Vang verified with Ms. Grewell that this business is their second location and asked who will be managing the day-to-day business to which Mr. Tim Suggs responded that he will be.

Ms. Vang also verified that they are co-partners.

Ms. Vang further asked how the two businesses would be managed. Mr. Suggs stated that he will primarily manage the business to help it launch since the other shop is doing well. He personally enjoys opening a new business.

Ms. Vang asked about staffing. Mr. Suggs responded they don't have anyone planned as far as managers for now. They do have an office manager Tracy and a building manager who helps keep the building functioning well.

Ms. Vang asked how the customers or the public's questions would be addressed if there are no managers onsite. Mr. Suggs responded he will pretty much be there and would be able to address questions or concerns.

Ms. Vang asked about their background in auto repair work. Mr. Suggs stated that he did not specifically have the skill to do the work, but they plan to hire employees to handle that aspect as they currently do at the existing shop.

Ms. Vang asked about the space in Saint Paul compared to Minneapolis. Mr. Suggs responded the square footage is bigger while the northeast shop is slightly bigger for capacity to work on cars.

Ms. Vang asked about hours. Mr. Suggs responded that they plan to open Monday through Friday. Ms. Grewell responded they are not sure of their hours yet, but probably plan on opening from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Ms. Vang asked about advertising. Ms. Grewell said they have a full-time employee who does marketing. They plan to advertise on Facebook and Google ads. They hope to do advertising in the local newspapers. They plan to do a grand opening and invite community members to meet them. They have some local businesses they will partner with to sponsor an annual peace celebration in the Rondo Neighborhood and work with Mr. Giles. They have a billboard planned. They are also going to advertise in Women's Press and put out an MPR radio ad.

Ms. Vang said if they will be open to appointments or walk-ins. Ms. Grewell responded yes.

Ms. Vang asked about signage. Mr. Suggs responded they plan to use existing signage with a new insert.

Ms. Vang encouraged them to talk to DSI about signage should their plans change. Mr. Suggs shared that they are aware and had asked a lot of questions about that before deciding on keeping the existing signage.

Ms. Vang asked how they will handle overflow vehicles. Mr. Suggs responded that when they purchase the business location, they also bought both sides of the building. They plan to keep storage indoor.

Ms. Vang next asked about the parking spaces and the U-shape parking lot. Ms. Grewell stated that customer parking will be located on the left side of the building; the northeast location (right side) will be used for employees parking.

Ms. Vang asked about lighting. Mr. Suggs responded they are working on it. If people come into the lot, there is a warning. They plan on putting more lights and security cameras on it. He put up some cameras, and they plan to put up more.

Ms. Vang was encouraged by their plan and suggested that before they put too much working into it to consider reaching out to the Police Department for their recommendation regarding camera placement. [Contact information was discussed and provided.]

Ms. Vang asked about garbage. Mr. Suggs responded they have 2 dumpsters that get picked up once a week for garbage and every other week for recycling. Ms. Grewell added they have a contract with Republic.

Ms. Vang asked about oil disposal and other liquids. Mr. Suggs responded they have oil burners that they hope to heat their other shop similar to what they current do at the Minneapolis location. Regarding coolant, they work with a company that recycles coolant who developed a process that can allow for re-use.

Ms. Vang went back to discuss the parking lot given its unique design, i.e., where will cars be repaired or placed on hold until ready for repair work. Mr. Suggs stated that a customer's car can pull into the parking lot and Ms. Grewell stated that the customer will then be able to walk into the shop. They don't intend to keep vehicles with missing parts on the parking lot long. As soon as the customer's car is being taken in for care, it will be brought inside the building which is a fairly large space.

Ms. Vang said the garage's doors when the weather gets nice and whether heavy machinery will be used and whether doors will be closed to minimize noise disruption. Mr. Suggs responded they will leave the door shut similar to their Minneapolis location. They will be installing A/C to cool the space and this will help keep the doors closed.

Ms. Vang next pulled up the history of the location and refer them to the agenda packet to follow along. She noted past graffiti nuisance and asked if they own the building or leasing the property. Mr. Suggs stated that they own the building and plan on putting more cameras up and to re-paint the exterior to clean up the place. They are waiting for the license being approved before they start working on the exterior.

Ms. Vang asked if they were aware of the City's graffiti policy and whether would like graffiti waiver and noted that the City only has one color. Mr. Suggs acknowledged but stated that they will have one building manager who will take care of both businesses' exterior. They plan to hire another building manager. Similar to their flagship location, they plan on also planting flowers to make it attractive and inviting for the community. They are also planning on putting

in a vegetable garden to share with the community. Ms. Vang next reviewed trash and illegal dumping on the property and asked that they be mindful and address them.

Ms. Vang verified with Mr. Fischbach that there was no police report.

Ms. Vang next asked about whether they are open or when the business will open. She noted that in their application, it stated an April opening. Ms. Grewell stated that they are currently not open but are there doing interior work. They plan to start on the exterior work when they get the license and are hoping for a June opening date.

Ms. Vang addressed the letter that DSI sent mentioning a fire certificate of occupancy and asked if they reached out to a fire inspector. Mr. Suggs stated that they have completed almost everything and have minor work to do to fix the ceiling tiles and are waiting to do the lights.

Ms. Vang asked about the parking plan. Ms. Grewell stated that the final parking plan was sent by Mr. Farhan Omar and Mr. Suggs added that they will improve the parking using the approved plan.

Ms. Vang also asked about the big white lines on the parking on the left side referencing a photo in the packet (Page 3 of 3) and noted that there is another business on that side. She asked how customers will know where to park given the two parking locations. Mr. Suggs stated that the customer parking will be on the left side and use the right side for employee parking. Ms. Grewell stated that they will make it clear for their customers to know where to park.

Ms. Vang suggested they may want to put a sign up so that customers know where to park.

Ms. Vang asked about trash bins. Mr. Suggs said they located inside the shop and get rolled out on trash day.

Ms. Vang acknowledged that there is one letter of objection from Dr. Artika Tyner, no address given. The letter was accepted and read into the record. Four reasons were stated as concerns: environmental justice, noise/nuisance, parking and zoning challenges.

Zoning was invited to discuss the use and Licensing was asked the number of garage licenses were considered as part of their review. Mr. Fischbach said the business is a nonconforming use which permits an auto garage license. He further stated that DSI does not take into account the number of garage licenses as part of their review process. When the University Avenue area was rezoned for light rail, off-street parking was eliminated. The neighborhood is zoned traditional neighborhood zoning districts and is classified as T3.

Ms. Vang if Ms. Grewell or Mr. Suggs would like to respond to Dr. Tyner's concerns. Ms. Grewell stated that she respects and supports a neighborhood advocate to voice her concerns. She shares her concerns and did personally reach out to Dr. Tyner. Ms. Grewell believes Dr. Tyner's

concerns are higher than the zoning issues and do not believe it is personal to their business. They would love to partner with Dr. Tyner or anyone else working on environmental justice issues. They would like to support healthy foods in the neighborhood. At their other location, they grow organic vegetables give them away for free. She has a Ph.D. in community engagement. Her research was around local food justice advocates. They hope to work with a number of organizations in the Rondo Neighborhood in creating a small community garden. Given the building and uses over the years, if something else goes into that space, someone who may want the building to be different may tear it down or do something else there that would raise its own environmental concerns. The reality is the current space is already set up for auto repairs; however, they hope they can be a partner and want to support this community's environmental justice and food initiatives.

Ms. Vang next asked about the 12 doors and how many cars can fit comfortably inside. Mr. Suggs responded 12.

Ms. Vang asked if they plan to use the parking spaces outside to address more cars needing repair that the space's allowances. Mr. Suggs says that cars will likely have to sit out in the parking lot. He added that they are planning to use some of the un-used office space to for indoor parking. They are not going to lease out those space.

Ms. Vang reminded them that car needing repairs that are parked on the lot to not have missing parts. She then asked how they would handle a situation where someone dropped their cars off or leave an abandoned vehicle on their lot after hours. Mr. Suggs stated that they will have it tow away similar to what they are doing at their other company.

Ms. Vang next open the hearing for public input. Ms. Cathy Heying, Lift Garage, 3614 42nd Avenue South, said she is in support of the applicant and is speaking on behalf of a business she runs called, Lift Garage. They are a non-profit auto repair shop, and they provide low-cost car repair for low- income folks. Tim and Rachel have been amazing partners in their work to fulfill that mission because they are not just auto repair shops, but a part of a community-building places. They support their neighbors in a variety of ways. They have hosted fundraisers for The Lift at their garage. Tim recently just joined the board of The Lift Garage and helped in innumerable ways to solve the problems of fixing low-income folks' cars when it is beyond the capacity of The Lift, to help them problem-solve, and provide loan equipment. They are invested in helping The Lift meet its mission. They are in tune to the needs of low-income neighbors, vulnerable neighbors, and people most at need in the community. Dr. Tyner's letter refers to valid things that they all share and have talked about. She is 110% confident that the Turbo Tim's family will be amazing advocates and partners in that neighborhood. She is very much in favor of the city granting the license. It is not just an auto repair shop; it will be a huge asset to the community.

Ms. Vang asked where they are based. Ms. Heying said they are located in Minneapolis between Lake and Minnehaha. They have high volume interests with folks scheduling appointments weeks in advance. The need is greater than their shop can handle. When she

has reached out to Tim and Rachel to ask them to help, they have been on board and focused on doing what they can to make their community better.

Ms. Vang that asked if anyone else wish to speak on the item. No one else came forward so Ms. Vang close the public input.

Based on Ms. Grewell and Mr. Suggs' testimonies, they are experienced in this line of work. They have been doing this for 10 years and their interest is to expand to Saint Paul building a similar model. She is encouraged by the business plan and what has been presented. The business will be a great addition to that neighborhood and Ms. Vang looks forward to seeing the business grow and succeed. Ms. Vang wishes them well and will support DSI's recommendation and recommend approval with no conditions.

Regarding the question earlier about good police contact for camera placements, Mr. Fischbach shared the St. Paul Police Crime Prevention Unit 's telephone 651-266-5625 and names of Officers Jacobson and Parsons for Ms. Grewell and Mr. Suggs. Otherwise, they are encouraged to call the police's general police line at 651-291-1111.

Ms. Vang re-stated the next step is her recommendation that will go before Council for their approval in a form of a resolution. The resolution will appear on the Council's consent agenda, meaning that the item is not subjected to a public hearing.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:39 p.m.