

LICENSE HEARING MINUTES
Hoodie's Coffee Den LLC, dba Catzen Coffee, 1416 Grand Ave
Thursday, July 23, 3:00 PM
Room 330 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Boulevard West
Nhia Vang, Legislative Hearing Officer

The hearing was called to order at 3:00 PM

Staff Present: Jeff Fischbach, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) Licensing Inspector; Grace Wagner, DSI Zoning Inspector (remote participation)

Licensee: Vanessa Beardsley, Applicant/Owner

License Application: Wine On Sale, Malt On Sale (Strong), and Entertainment A licenses

Legislative Hearing Officer Nhia Vang made introductory comments about the hearing process: This is an informal legislative hearing for a license application. This license application required a Class N notification to inform neighbors and the District Council about the application and provide them with an opportunity to submit comments. The city received correspondence of concern/objection, which triggered this hearing.

The hearing will proceed as follows: DSI staff will explain their review of the application and state their recommendation. The applicant will be asked to discuss their business plan. Members of the community will be invited to testify as to whether they object to or support the license application. 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; the City Council is the final authority on whether the license is approved or denied.

There are three possible results from this hearing: 1) a recommendation that the City Council issue this license without any conditions; 2) a recommendation that the City Council issue this license with agreed upon conditions; or 3) a recommendation that the City Council not issue this license 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.

Minutes:

Jeff Fischbach, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) - Licensing, gave a staff report for licensee Hoodie's Coffee Den, (DSIBLLIQ-000958-2026), d/b/a Catzen Coffee, located at 1416 Grand Ave. The application is for Wine On Sale, Malt On Sale (Strong), and Entertainment A licenses. DSI is recommending approval with the following license conditions:

1. Per City of Saint Paul Legislative Code 409.13(a)(2), On-sale wine license shall mean a license authorizing the sale of wine not exceeding fourteen (14) percent alcohol by volume, for consumption on the licensed premises only in conjunction with the sale and service of food (menu item only). The sale of Malt (Strong) will also take place only in conjunction with the sale and service of food.
2. Per City of Saint Paul Legislative Code 409.13(e), licensee must be able to show that gross receipts are at least sixty (60) percent attributable to the sale of food.
3. Licensee will submit to the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) annual gross receipts for food and liquor for each year the license is renewed.

4. Per City of Saint Paul Legislative Code 411.02, the definition of Entertainment A is, "Amplified or nonamplified music and/or singing by performers without limitation as to number, and group singing participated in by patrons of the establishment." (includes karaoke). Entertainment A license does not allow for patron and/or performance dances.

No correspondence was received from the Macalester Groveland Community Council. Building conditions, N/A; License approved with conditions; and Zoning approved.

Fischbach: The conditions we are recommending are all standard for the licenses being applied for.

Hearing Officer Vang asked about the Zoning review.

Grace Wagner, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) - Zoning, gave a staff report. The area is zoned T2 – Traditional Neighborhood. This is a permitted use. The use is not changing. There are no parking requirements associated with this application.

Hearing Officer Vang asked if the applicant understood and agreed to the conditions listed on the Class N Notification.

Beardsley: I agree to them.

Hearing Officer Vang asked the applicant to talk about the business: history, hours of operation, number of employees, etc.

Beardsley: I have lived in Saint Paul for 25 years. I opened the coffee shop as an addition to the neighborhood that I live in. It's a coffee shop and a cat café. We completed a patio extension in the spring with wildflowers and insect housing. While we were out there, we realized it was a good place for a glass of wine.

Fischbach: You have no planned extension liquor service outside though?

Beardsley: No.

Fischbach: If you would like to do that in the future, that would require another license, and you would need to go through this process again.

Beardsley: That sounds great.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is your patio accessible?

Beardsley: It is terraced up to alley level.

Hearing Officer Vang: Are you just adding wine?

Beardsley: Yes, just wine. I don't want to sell beer.

Hearing Officer Vang: Please describe the cat café.

Beardsley: We have a separate cat lounge space that is styled like a living room. The cat room is behind a closed door. The cats all live there, and none are up for adoption. We have 9 cats in total. My intent was to give college students a place to hang out when they are away from home and away from their pets. The air is also clear due to the ventilation system that we have, and the coffee shop area is allergen-free.

Hearing Officer Vang: Are there tables in the cat area?

Beardsley: No, there aren't tables. There is enough seating for 12 and people pick the spots they want.

Hearing Officer Vang: When did you open?

Beardsley: We opened January 1, 2025. Recently, I wanted to add wine for the evening and do local artist acoustic music on Friday nights in the lounge. The music is only in the lounge, and there is great sound separation between the two spaces and the patio. They can have different ambient music playing and you can't hear the other music from other spaces.

Hearing Officer Vang: Have you ever served wine or beer?

Beardsley: This is my first business. I was an attorney, and this is a third career move; however, our manager is very experienced and has already signed all staff members up for alcohol training.

Hearing Officer Vang: Will this change your trash volume?

Beardsley: It will only change recycling, I think. All the wine will be canned wine, so there will be no bottles or corks. The trash and recycling currently come once a week, we used to do 2 times a week but that was excessive; if we need to increase again then we are happy to do that.

Hearing Officer Vang: How will wine deliveries work?

Beardsley: My manager is deciding which wine to order, we haven't decided yet, so I don't know how it will work.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do current deliveries have a dedicated spot?

Beardsley: Current deliveries must come through the front door; the alley is above us and not usable for deliveries.

Hearing Officer Vang: Can you describe the parking behind?

Beardsley: The parking is only for staff; deliveries park in the refuge lane in the center.

Hearing Officer Vang: Will you be increasing staff?

Beardsley: Currently, we have 20 staff members. I have no plans to increase unless needed.

Hearing Officer Vang: What are your hours of operation?

Beardsley: Mondays to Fridays 7am – 7pm, Sundays 7am – 5pm.

Hearing Officer Vang next read into the record the letters of objection from Diane and John Porter, 1396 Grand Ave, which voiced concerns about noise that would be coming from the patio. She then gave the applicant the opportunity to respond.

Beardsley: I sat down with both people. They have a beautiful garden and I understand the anxiety about noise. I told them there would be no outdoor sound and they seemed okay with it.

Hearing Officer Vang stated that after reviewing the records and considering the testimonies from all parties, she will recommend to the City Council that they approve the license with the following agreed-upon conditions:

1. Per City of Saint Paul Legislative Code 409.13(a)(2), On-sale wine license shall mean a license authorizing the sale of wine not exceeding fourteen (14) percent alcohol by volume, for consumption on the licensed premises only in conjunction with the sale and service of food (menu item only). The sale of Malt (Strong) will also take place only in conjunction with the sale and service of food.
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4. Per City of Saint Paul Legislative Code 411.02, the definition of Entertainment A is, "Amplified or nonamplified music and/or singing by performers without limitation as to number, and group singing participated in by patrons of the establishment." (includes karaoke). Entertainment A license does not allow for patron and/or performance dances.

The hearing adjourned at 3:18 PM.

The Conditions Affidavit was signed on July 3, 2026 and submitted on July 10, 2026.