LICENSE HEARING MINUTES
Restaurant Aubergine, 525 Selby Ave
Monday, October 20, 10:00 AM
Room 330 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Boulevard West
Nhia Vang, Legislative Hearing Officer

The hearing was called to order at 10:00 AM

Staff Present: Tom Ferrara, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) Licensing Inspector; Ashley Skarda, DSI Licensing Inspector; YaYa Diatta, DSI Zoning Manager (remote participation)

Licensee: Megan Jacobse, Applicant/Co-Owner; Bjorn Jacobse, Co-Owner

License Application: Liquor On-Sale - 100 seats or less, Liquor On-Sale Sunday, and Liquor Outdoor Service Area – Patio 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. Ultimately, the City Council is the final authority on whether the license application is approved or denied.

Minutes:

Tom Ferrara, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) - Licensing, gave a staff report for licensee Aubergine Hospitality LLC, (License ID# DSIBLLIQ-000182-2025), d/b/a Restaurant Aubergine, located at 2115 Summit Ave. The application is for Liquor On-Sale - 100 seats or less, Liquor On-Sale Sunday, and Liquor Outdoor Service Area – Patio licenses. DSI is recommending approval with the following license conditions:

1. Licensee agrees to operate the establishment in compliance with Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative code as a "Restaurant".
2. Licensee agrees to close the establishment at 12:00 a.m. midnight. All patrons/customers shall vacate the premises by 12:30 a.m. each day of the week as per Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative Code.
3. Patio shall close by 10:00 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday and 11:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

The District 8 Summit-University Planning Council was informed of the application by the applicant. Building conditions, N/A; Licensing approved with conditions; Zoning approved.

Hearing Officer Vang: Were these the same conditions that the Revival restaurant had when they were at this location?

Ferrara: Yes.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do you have any questions about the conditions?

Megan Jacobse: We agree to them.

Ferrara: We have a copy of the conditions affidavit to sign today.

YaYa Diatta, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) - Zoning, gave a staff report. The area is zoned B2 – Community Business. This is a permitted use. There are no parking minimum requirements for this application.

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

M. Jacobse: We are doing some substantial construction. It will be a French restaurant that partners with farmers and ranchers in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. It will be upscale. We have the patio in summer, and then inside there are 8 bar seats, 46 dining room seats, and a 15-18-seat private dining space that can also be used for open seating.

Hearing Officer Vang: How big and how many seats are on the patio?

M. Jacobse: I don't have the dimensions, but never more than 20 people will be seated out there. We are not making changes to it.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is the patio enclosed? Is entry to the patio only through the interior of the restaurant?

M. Jacobse: It's enclosed. One side is a neighboring building that our landlord also owns, and the other two sides have 6-foot fences. There is a back entrance through the parking lot. It will be used for deliveries or other access needs.

Hearing Officer Vang: What are the substantial changes you are making?

M. Jacobse: We are waiting for construction permits. Right now, we have a demo permit and are doing interior work. The kitchen will be expanding. The bar is moving to the center of the

restaurant. We are also making sure the kitchen and dining room are all up to code.

Hearing Officer Vang: Does that require a separate fire certificate of occupancy review, outside of the building review?

Ferrara: The fire certificate of occupancy review is done with the building review.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is the overall footprint changing?

M. Jacobse: No.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do you know when structural work will start?

M. Jacobse: We're still waiting on permits and doing demo work right now.

Hearing Officer Vang: When do you intend to open?

M. Jacobse: January 2026.

Hearing Officer Vang: Will you be owning or leasing the property?

Bjorn Jacobse: Leasing.

Hearing Officer Vang: What are you backgrounds in liquor service?

B. Jacobse: We have a combined 30 years in the hospitality industry. I've been cooking for 15 years, and she's been doing front-of-the-house work for 15 years. We've worked in well-known restaurants and want to bring something back to St. Paul.

Hearing Officer Vang: Why did you choose this location?

B. Jacobse: We live close by. We moved back 18 months ago and live in the West 7th neighborhood. It's always been our goal to open a restaurant near where we live to have that sense of community.

M. Jacobse: I've been a bartender, bar manager, operations director, and general manager. I intimately understand the laws and regulations around alcohol.

Hearing Officer Vang: How do you manage overserved or disgruntled patrons?

M. Jacobse: I've experienced disgruntled patrons but haven't overserved anyone. When there is a patron who is upset about being cut off, alerting all staff and going through proper procedures, getting them out safely, and getting them home safely are all important. Staff and guest safety is important. We are also willing to contact law enforcement if need be.

Hearing Officer Vang: How much staff will you have?

M. Jacobse: We will be starting off without private dining or usage of the patio, so staff will be leaner to start. We plan to open with 8 front house staff.

B. Jacobse: Back house staff will be 7, including me.

Hearing Officer Vang: How much is the kitchen being expanded?

B. Jacobse: 10 feet towards Selby Ave. It will be semi-open and viewable.

Hearing Officer Vang: How many bartenders will you have?

M. Jacobse: Two on staff. Only one will be working at a time

Hearing Officer Vang: What will your hours be?

B. Jacobse: Tuesday through Saturday, 5pm – 10pm.

M. Jacobse: Maybe 11pm on weekends.

Hearing Officer Vang: What are your plans for customer and staff parking?

M. Jacobse: Most staff live in St. Paul and people will be using public transit. We have parking on the east side of the building, and our landlord acquired the Great Harvest building across the street which has a parking lot on the west side. It's 30 spots total for us, Solo Vino next door, and Great Harvest across the street. Neither of those other two businesses are open late.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do you have anything else you'd like to share?

M. Jacobse: We are bringing our shared experience from our time abroad, our time on the west coast, and our time at other twin cities restaurants. The community aspect of our business is important to us. We want to support neighboring small businesses and farms we work with. We don't use large distributors. Moving back to St. Paul was important to us in making this decision.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do your farms and alcohol vendors deliver?

B. Jacobse: Yes.

Hearing Officer Vang: How is trash pickup handled?

M. Jacobse: We haven't determined that yet. Weekly pickup is anticipated.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is Solo Vino connected to your business?

M. Jacobse: Our building has 5 stalls. We have 3 of them, they have 2.

Hearing Officer Vang: What is your plan to minimize outside noise?

M. Jacobse: We will have ambient restaurant music that will not be loud. There will be no live music.

Hearing Officer Vang: Are indoor hours the same as patio hours?

M. Jacobse: Yes. They will be the same as Revival's hours.

Hearing Officer Vang: What do you use for patio lighting?

M. Jacobse: String lighting.

Hearing Officer Vang: Will there be a dedicated patio staffer?

M. Jacobse: Yes. We also had a neighborhood meeting in September where neighborhood concerns were discussed. We want good relationships with neighbors and want a direct line to them.

Hearing Officer Vang: Was anyone at that meeting with the area's district council?

M. Jacobse: Not then, but we have met with them and want to build that relationship.

Hearing Officer Vang: Did they have advice, given their experience with Revival?

M. Jacobse: No. We want to be more a part of the community than Revival was. They are a chain that isn't based in St. Paul.

Hearing Officer Vang: Have you worked at any other restaurants in St. Paul?

M. Jacobse: I was at Spoon & Stable for 3 years. Bjorn and I met at Zelo in downtown Minneapolis. We have not worked in St. Paul until we moved back. I work at Meritage now.

Diatta: Were you working abroad in France, Bjorn?

B. Jacobse: I was Montreal, Canada for a few years. I was born in Leon, France.

Hearing Officer Vang next referred to the 525 Selby Complaints and Incident report documents.

Ferrara described DSI's complaint process and enforcement tools, ranging from education to potential adverse action and the associated penalty matrix.

Hearing Officer Vang next read into the record the letters of concern, which raised concerns about noise, hours, late-night maintenance, and after-hours contacts.

Ferrara: Not sure why the roof power-washing would be linked to the restaurant. That seems more linked to the property owner.

M. Jacobse: Will not do work like that outside of work hours.

B. Jacobse: We will also be closed Sunday and Monday. People will be in on Mondays doing prep work, and it will be a heavier delivery day. Regarding the loud work mentioned in the first letter, we hadn't begun demo work yet, so that wasn't us. Didn't have the permit yet.

Hearing Officer Vang: Are you willing to share contact info for neighbors to reach you after hours?

M. Jacobse: Yes. We want to know what's going on and want to be directly contacted.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is there anything else you would like to add on noise and maintenance?

B. Jacobse: We want to be respectful. We won't play loud music and want to be contacted if there are issues.

Ferrara: From memory, Revival did not have major issues with patio noise.

M. Jacobse: Unfortunately, the 9pm closure asked for in one of the letters is unreasonable. We will adhere to 10pm closure on weekdays that's outlined in the conditions affidavit.

B. Jacobse: It's a nice patio. We want to take advantage of it.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do they need an obstruction permit for the patio?

Ferrara: No.

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 conditions:

1. Licensee agrees to operate the establishment in compliance with Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative code as a "Restaurant".
2. Licensee agrees to close the establishment at 12:00 a.m. midnight. All patrons/customers shall vacate the premises by 12:30 a.m. each day of the week as per Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative Code.
3. Patio shall close by 10:00 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday and 11:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

The hearing adjourned at 10:40 AM.

The conditions affidavit was signed and submitted on October 20, 2025.