

Mr. Bill Dermody, St. Paul City Planner  
& Mr. President and Members of the St. Paul City Council

My name is Doug Hoverson, and I reside at 5612 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue South in Minneapolis. While I live in Minneapolis, I have long admired St. Paul for its community-wide sense of place and history.

I am the author of *Land of Amber Waters: The History of Brewing in Minnesota*, and am a frequent contributor of articles to several publications that cover both historic brewing and the modern craft brewing industry. I have also worked with the National Brewery Museum in Potosi, Wisconsin on several projects, and with other museums and community groups on the history of brewing. In the course of my research for all these projects, I have learned much about how local beer can build a sense of community and enhance the economy. I am excited to see the progress of the Stone Saloon, and I urge the St. Paul City Council to approve the Historic Use Variance for the petitioner and to allow the Stone Saloon to give us today a glimpse into the daily life of our predecessors of 150 years ago.

As a historian, I have been very impressed by the research the petitioner, Mr. Schroeder, has undertaken, first to document the status of the building, and then to recreate its historic feel. I have had the pleasure to contribute in a very small way to this research, and am glad to see that so many others have been willing to share of their time, wisdom and carpentry skills to not only restore the Stone Saloon, but to make it not simply a museum of beer culture, but also of the politics and consumer culture of the Civil War era. As a high school history teacher at Saint Thomas Academy, I see my students are most excited about learning history when they start asking the question: “what was it like to live back then?” While I obviously have no plans to bring my high school students to the Stone Saloon on a field trip, the love of history does not and should not end in school, and offering St. Paul residents and visitors to the city a historical experience in an authentic context like this will make citizens more conscious of the history around them and more willing to make a conscious effort to preserve other worthwhile structures of the past.

As a working beer journalist, I have seen old saloons, brewpubs and museums around the nation, and St. Paul has an opportunity to create a unique attraction which should draw attention and visits from far and wide. To the best of my knowledge, there is no similar project anywhere in the country. While there are a few modern craft breweries that have opened in former brewery buildings, none of these are truly restorations that attempt to recreate the experience of their original operation. The Stone Saloon project may be closer to McSorley’s Tavern in New York City, a living museum of an activity which was an important part of daily life. St. Paul’s already enviable reputation as a custodian of its past and as a craft beer mecca would be enhanced by the presence of a vibrant Stone Saloon.

As both a historian and a high school teacher, I am also well aware of the potential for problems surrounding the provision of alcohol, even that made to historic specifications.

It has been my experience in three decades of following and researching craft beer culture that craft beer lovers treat their product with a high level of respect and the levels of abuse and irresponsible behavior are generally lower for this group. While the concern of some neighbors is understandable and should be addressed, careful drawing of ordinances and good stewardship by the petitioner could make the Stone Saloon an asset to neighborhood safety rather than a risk. In general, a customer who is willing to pay more to drink an authentic lager in a historic setting is someone who is conscious and respectful of the surroundings.

Too many restoration projects start with great fanfare, but fizzle out due to a lack of time, money, or support. I am excited to see the Stone Saloon nearing the finish line, and look forward to seeing it become an asset to the neighborhood, St. Paul's historic properties, and the world of respectful enjoyment of local craft beer. I urge the Council to grant the variance. This project should enhance the reputation of St. Paul as "the most livable city in America."

Thank you for your time, and for your service to the city.

Doug Hoverson