

LICENSE HEARING MINUTES
Taste of Rondo Restaurant, 976 Concordia Avenue
Thursday, April 25, 2019, 2:00 p.m.
Room 330 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Boulevard West
Nhia Vang, Deputy Legislative Hearing Officer

The hearing was called to order at 2:01 p.m.

Staff Present: Jeff Fischbach, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI)

Licensee: Charles Carter and Kasara Carter, Applicant/Owner

License Application: Liquor On Sale - 100 Seats or Less, Liquor On Sale - Sunday, Entertainment (A)

Other(s) Present: Marvin Anderson, Ronald Buford, Colleen Halpine, Chris Fischer, Salvia Lani, Marie Tran, Ben Jackson, Arnold G., Leon Daisy, Nieeta Presley, Caty Royce, Al Young, Michael Lopez, Gene Barringer, Craig Henderson, William Moore, Leon Daisy

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 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) gave a staff report. He read the recommended conditions:

Recommended 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" and acknowledges having received a copy of

Section 409.02. Requirements under this section include that the establishment offer full menu service up until one (1) hour prior to closing, actively promotes food sales, and maintains a kitchen staffed with clearly identifiable personnel during all hours of full menu service.

2. Licensee agrees to close the establishment at 12:00 a.m. midnight. All patrons/customers/members of the establishment shall vacate the premises by 12:30 a.m. each day of the week as per City Zoning Code (parking requirement) and Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative Code.
3. The sale, service, display and/or consumption of alcohol shall be restricted to the licensed premises area as per the approved plan on-file with the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI). Licensee acknowledges the approved liquor service area shall be restricted to the interior of the first floor (i.e., main level) of the building. No liquor sales, service, display and/or consumption is permitted in the basement of the building without prior written approval from DSI.
4. No sales, service, display, and/or consumption of alcohol is allowed outdoors without prior written approval and additional licensing from DSI.
5. 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.

Mr. Fischbach said DSI had received a letter of support from the Summit University Planning Council, Building was in process, License and Zoning approved with conditions, and DSI recommended approval with conditions.

Ms. Vang asked Mr. Carter whether he had any questions about the conditions. Mr. Carter said he had no questions. He said they wouldn't be using the basement now, and sale or consumption outdoors was not part of the business plan at this time. He said he did not disagree, and the conditions were fine.

Ms. Vang asked how "clearly identifiable personnel," in Condition 1, was defined. Mr. Fischbach said they didn't have a definition but would rely on the business owner to propose something.

Ms. Kasara Carter said everyone on staff would be wearing the same uniform, and patrons would know who was working by the warm staff and friendly greeting.

Ms. Vang asked whether Mr. and Ms. Carter would be co-managing. Ms. Carter said they were a team. Ms. Carter referred to Condition 5, and said she wanted to reiterate the plan as far as the Entertainment A license was satellite radio playing inside the restaurant over dinner. Ms. Vang asked Mr. Fischbach whether an Entertainment A license was needed. Mr. Carter said if they had a special birthday party he might invite a saxophone player, but it wouldn't be a deejay or anything like that. Ms. Carter said there would be no dancing.

Ms. Vang asked the applicants discussed their plans. Ms. Carter reviewed their business plan included in packet; she read the executive summary and mission statement. She said they had been working on this for a quite a while, trying to craft something that would be beneficial to the

neighborhood while considering the families and demographic of the area. She said they had been working with the Metropolitan Economic Development Association (MEDA) for two years; they'd worked with Neighborhood STAR, from whom they had received funding for the project; their change to a restaurant status had been approved and they had met all the requirements; they had reached out to Jeremiah program for their support; they had reached out to Summit University Planning Council and held several forums. She said they recognized they were in a neighborhood, but there was no other business like the one they were proposing, and there was a need. She said they had had to work hard to change some of the perceptions of what they were bringing, but they had thought about it and had a business plan they'd shared with their neighbors. She said they were connected with neighbors through a neighborhood link; she read from an email she had sent to neighbors responding to their concerns and sharing the business plan.

Ms. Vang asked Ms. Carter to share some of the concerns that had been expressed by neighbors. Ms. Carter said there was another establishment in the area called the Pioneer Club that had become a concern for some neighbors, perhaps due to a lack of transparency and lack of understanding of how the club operated, and that had translated into resistance to them (A Taste of Rondo) being in the neighborhood. She said they had had to work hard to change the perception of their establishment. Ms. Vang asked about the type of establishment and location of the Pioneer Club. Ms. Carter said she believed it was a private club house for Masons, and it was about a block away. She asked that people separate those impressions because the Pioneer Club was not what they were bringing to the table.

Ms. Vang asked how they had reached out to neighbors to change perceptions. Ms. Carter said they'd had several forums at the Summit University Planning Council, hosted meet-and-greets, knocked on doors, passed out fliers, participated in the Rondo Days parade. Mr. Carter said they also hosted forums at the establishment at 976 Concordia, and had 75 to 100 people, and they had cooked hotdogs and gave pop. He said he wanted people to make the distinction between their establishment and the Mason's club. He said they were a restaurant that was creating 22 jobs. Ms. Carter said their (A Taste of Rondo) footprint was larger and they could have 100 seats or less and serve food, and, hopefully beverages. Mr. Carter said Dixies on Grand was a prime example, and if people were to think of them as Dixie's, maybe their minds would change. He said they were a restaurant, providing jobs and recognizing Rondo, and there was no comparison (to the Pioneer Club). He said no people would be hanging around outside with their pants sagging, or gang members. Ms. Carter said they hadn't had any disturbances or issues since they'd been there. Mr. Carter said the City had issued him ten to twelve temporary liquor licenses and they hadn't had any police calls or anyone hanging around outside.

Ms. Vang asked whether they were open now; she noted that Building was not signed off. Ms. Carter said this was the last piece of the puzzle. She said they were going to be investing a lot of money and had already invested lots of time and money. She said the difference between serving food and serving food with alcohol, was quite different, and they were there to make money as well. Mr. Carter said they considered this an upgrade to the neighborhood; he said they were spending \$500,000, and that was an upgrade to him, with a beautiful restaurant, beautiful porch, and beautiful landscaping. Ms. Vang asked when they planned to open. Ms. Carter said the application had been approved for the building permit but they hadn't picked it up because they

were waiting to see how this conversation went. She said some things were contingent on others. Mr. Carter said they were hoping to open August 1. Ms. Carter said it would be a 60 to 90-day build-out projection.

Ms. Vang asked what kind of renovations were being done to the kitchen. Ms. Carter said all the plans were in the packet they had submitted. Mr. Carter said it was an open kitchen plan. Ms. Carter said they had started demolition and were down to four walls. Mr. Carter clarified for Ms. Vang which was the up-to-date plan and reviewed it with her; Ms. Carter reviewed the plans with the neighbors who were present.

Ms. Vang confirmed that Mr. and Ms. Carter new they had to have a certain percentage of sales in food. Mr. Carter said they were planning a very small bar, with 14 seats; the open part of the restaurant had 25 seats, and there were 14 more seats in the private area. Ms. Carter said it would be like Dixies, where guests could order fish with a glass of white wine.

Ms. Vang asked how big the staff would be. Mr. Carter said about 25, including 10 full-time jobs. Ms. Carter noted the hierarchy included in the business plan packet.

Ms. Vang said she knew they'd met the parking requirement; she asked where they would be directing staff to park. Mr. Carter said there were nine spots in back, for managers and staff, and there was a handicapped space in back. Ms. Vang noted from Mr. Carter's statement that they planned to hire staff from the community, and some staff might walk to work. Mr. Carter and Ms. Carter said that was correct. Ms. Carter said there would be a bike rack in front.

Ms. Vang asked whether alcohol awareness training would be required for employees before the license was issued. Mr. Fischbach said they would go through the liquor manual with the senior license inspector, and that was different from alcohol awareness training. Ms. Carter said they understood the age restrictions. Mr. Carter said he was also attending the Minnesota School of Bartending.

Ms. Vang asked about their background in the restaurant industry. Ms. Carter said she worked in a start-up restaurant, amongst others, in college, serving food and beverage for about 2 ½ years, and understood back-of-the-house, front-of-the-house, management, inventory, staffing. Mr. Carter said he was attending school to be a restaurant manager, and was currently a manager and had been managing for about 25 years all the Catholic cemeteries in the Twin Cities. He said he was a good manager, and when you were a good manager everything would fall in place.

Ms. Vang asked about the hours of operation of 7:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., Monday through Sunday from their business plan. Ms. Carter said that was the plan; she said they planned to operate within whatever parameters they were allotted through licensing, but would be thoughtful in their hours of operation.

Ms. Vang asked whether the applicants wanted to add anything else. Ms. Carter said the plan was a living document and would change as they learned, but it was very comprehensive and complete, and had satisfied MEDA and DSI.

Ms. Vang asked whether they had their restaurant license from the state. Mr. Carter said they did. Ms. Vang asked about outdoor cooking. Mr. Carter said there was no outdoor cooking; there was a patio with a privacy fence, but there would be no food or alcohol.

Ms. Vang opened the hearing for public comment, starting with those who had identified themselves as associated with the business.

Nieeta Presley (544 Payne Avenue), ASANDC, spoke about the importance of preserving the remaining Rondo assets, and about her support of the project as a remaining asset being repurposed as a new asset to the neighborhood. She read from her letter of support about her personal connection to the building, the significance to the community of Rondo's history and culture, and importance and need for Black-owned businesses. She said the liquor license was not about drinking but about enhancing their viability. She said her organization was a business development organization and could provide technical assistance, along with their partner neighborhood development center. She spoke about the advantage of having a patio. Ms. Vang asked whether a patio is in the plan. Mr. and Ms. Carter clarified that a patio was part of a later phase of the project and an "opportunity area." Ms. Presley said she had confidence in Mr. and Ms. Carter to manage the business.

Al Young (967 Carroll) said there was a lot of history and stories there and it should be open, and would increase his property values.

Marvin Anderson (679 Holly Avenue) said he was born and raised at 989 Rondo; he spoke about the history of the building. He asked for clarification of the number of letters of support received. Ms. Vang clarified that letters of support were part of Mr. Carter's packet, and said that since Mr. Anderson was present, she would not read his letter of support into the record, but would rely on his testimony. Mr. Anderson said his letter of support echoed many things Ms. Presley said. He spoke about his involvement and leadership with the Rondo Community. He said the City had designated this area as a Cultural Destination Area (CDA), and Taste of Rondo was right in the pathway of what this CDA could become. He spoke about the proposed land bridge that would have a terminus at Taste of Rondo. He said he was convinced that Mr. Carter's mission and vision was more than just words, but paid honor and respect to the history of Rondo and would honor the previous traditions of the restaurants on Rondo.

Ben Jackson (1303 6th Street) said he was working with the Carters to help develop the restaurant, and worked with Ms. Presley in an organization called Community Enhancement Group. He noted the jobs lost from what was a vibrant middle-class Rondo neighborhood. He said the restaurant would help to revitalize the neighborhood, offer jobs with livable wages, provide tax revenue for city, and use contractors that were section 3 minority and women contractors. He said the economic development plan helped the entire community, and as the community was uplifted, crime went down. He said the plan could be utilized as a model for other neighborhoods.

Ronald Buford (1800 Graham Avenue), said he'd been working with the Carters, and had been involved on Rondo days. He said after reading the letters (of opposition) it sounded like they supported a restaurant but not a liquor license right out of the gate, and seems like (Taste of

Rondo) was being stereotyped before the establishment was even open. He said most restaurants were successful because they could serve alcohol. He said even with the 60/40 split between food and alcohol sales, the revenue generated through alcohol sales was vital to sustaining a successful restaurant. He said he understood the concerns, but asked to be given a chance and not cut their legs out from under them before they'd even started. He said relating their liquor license to past historical violence in the area was jumping the gun, and a liquor license would enhance a restaurant's ability to be successful.

Gene Barringer (501 Dale Street), Community Stabilization Project, said he was a 50-year resident of Rondo community and of Cathedral Hill, and had watched the transition of Rondo over the years. He said what he was seeing from his urban planning background, was the development of a neighborhood and an aspect of equity. He said his parents had a business in Rondo, and he would like to see that with Mr. and Ms. Carter. He said he traveled a lot, and people were aware of the Rondo land bridge and Taste of Rondo. He asked why Taste of Rondo couldn't serve as an establishment for African Americans, which was not currently available in the Twin Cities. He said young people were looking to Mr. and Ms. Carter as a direction. He said the grace of God had brought this about. He noted the transformation of the Selby and Dale area.

Michael Lopez (840 Selby Avenue) asked "what does it take." He spoke about progression in society, and asked how many Black businesses there were in the community where someone could sit down and eat; he referred to the Asian restaurants on University Avenue. He said people in the community were looking at this and were examining the people making the decision (referred to licensing staff and Ms. Vang). He said he was one of the people fighting for an economic development driver, but it would mean nothing unless there was a turn of thought. He said it was hard to be an African American male in Minnesota, and he asked Ms. Vang to try to do her best to look into herself and recognize that minorities had to work harder for the recognition people got every day. He said he was looking at Mr. and Ms. Carter, knowing they had a beautiful family and beautiful marriage, and he was asking himself again what it would take for something really rudimentary to be thought about. He said historical data showed a very great skew. He said people of color were on the defense and fighting for something that should be standard and be a no-brainer. He encouraged Ms. Vang to look inside herself and ask what was making her not make this go through. He said he was sure a lot of other businesses not of color went through this without as much scrutiny, and he hoped to see something different from the leadership of the city to which he paid taxes.

Ms. Vang reiterated that her role was to develop a recommendation, and to not make the decision of whether the applicants would get their license. She said the decision rested with the City Council.

Ms. Carter said she appreciated the support, and would be listening to the concerns. She said they wanted to work alongside their neighbors because she wanted them to be customers. She said she wanted people to be able to come and enjoy a meal and enjoy it with alcohol. Mr. Carter expressed appreciation for the support, and wanted to reach out to those with concerns and let them know everyone was welcome.

Salvia Lani (974 Iglehart Avenue) said she was new to the neighborhood a few blocks away. She said they didn't have all the information and weren't sure if they were for or against, and had a few questions. She said it was nice to hear the business plan and the testimony about what they were looking to create. She said the history of the establishment had been a concern, and she asked how they (Mr. and Ms. Carter) were going to keep their plan and vision on track. She noted that the building was the American Legion and then a private club; she asked if Mr. and Ms. Carter were new owners. Mr. Carter said he never owned the American Legion. He said they had been there since 2013 and had invested a lot of time and money in it. He said Ms. Lani would be safe and secure. He said they had had events there with temporary liquor licenses with no trouble in the five years they had been there. Ms. Carter said a lot of the misconception came from the previous owners, which had a different purpose and was a different package. Mr. Carter said 80% of the people who were there at the time of the American Legion were gone, and a lot of the neighbors were like Ms. Lani – people who wanted a place like the Taste of Rondo.

Ms. Lani said another question was parking. Ms. Carter said with parking in back and on the street, they met the requirements for a restaurant. She said when they'd had gatherings there with upwards of 50 to 100 people there, there was ample parking and there were no thefts or break-ins. She said with a restaurant, the parking would turn over. Mr. Carter said he knew they had more parking available than any restaurant on Selby. He said it was plenty of parking.

Ms. Vang asked whether they'd had an exit plan for closing time during the private events they'd held. Ms. Carter said they always had security staff at the exits; she said it could get dark, and security could help people get to their cars safely. She said they were going to be adding more lighting with the business. She said they didn't let folks just hang out outside because they wanted to be respectful of the neighbors. Mr. Carter said it wasn't that type of establishment; he said the music would be soft country, soft rock, soul music from the 70s and 80s.

Ms. Lani said she was not worried the restaurant having a liquor license but was worried about other people. She said there were a lot of small children; she noted the testimony about alcohol awareness training and she asked that Mr. and Ms. Carter be aware of the people they were serving and making sure the neighbors felt safe. Mr. Carter said Ms. Lani's concerns were deeply his concerns. He said he could lose his license or be sued. He said he could lose everything, and it had been an investment of a lot of time and money. He said they cared. Ms. Carter encouraged Ms. Lani to reach out at any time for more information. Ms. Carter said Ms. Lani could come to work for them; she spoke about offering job opportunities for residents of the Jeremiah program.

Craig Henderson (979 Iglehart Avenue) said they had a different perception, and had thought it was going to be private club. He said they were happy it was going to be a restaurant for the community. He said he would like to avoid calling the police if there were concerns, and would like to just call the restaurant. He said he would like to have that type of relationship, and have Mr. and Ms. Carter as owners be receptive to that. Mr. Carter said they were not going to have private events, but when they did previously, they had security to patrol the neighborhood. He said the restaurant would attract people like himself and Mr. Henderson and others from the neighborhood; he said they were a food establishment and not a bar. Ms. Carter said they could post "No Loitering." Mr. Carter said it was just not that type of establishment.

Ms. Lani said there was a lot of misconception because of that other club. Ms. Carter said the letters of opposition indicated that the other building had not been regulated in a way that made people not confident that Taste of Rondo wouldn't produce the same sort of nuisance. Mr. Carter said he would like to put in some money to upgrade the appearance of that building to make the environment feel more welcoming. He said it was a private club for the Masons, and they weren't a part of that, but a coat of paint or a mural, and a private fence could make it look less like a ghost building.

Mr. Henderson said it had been fun listening to everyone, and they had learned a lot and were totally in favor.

Ms. Vang stressed that this was the opportunity to exchange information. Ms. Carter said they were open to receiving any questions or concerns, and wanted to serve the community.

Marie Tran (973 Iglehart Avenue) submitted a letter from another neighbor who couldn't be present. Ms. Vang received letter from Mr. Peter Morales at 971 Iglehart; she said she would make a copy. She gave the letter to Ms. Carter so they could read it and respond.

Ms. Tran said had lived there for 13 years and loved the neighborhood and diversity. She said, "we only know what we know," and her only experience with that building was with the previous owner and it didn't produce a lot of good feelings. She gave examples of the problems associated with the previous business, and said the current bar on the next block still had a lot of those problems. She said those were the experiences neighbors associated with alcohol. She said she loved a restaurant but questioned whether the neighborhood needed another liquor license. She said she had been a business owner and knew liquor could make money, but this was a neighborhood and a community with families, and was not located in a business district.

Ms. Carter said they appreciated what Ms. Tran was saying. She said they could assume a lot of the disruption came from Pioneer but didn't know that for sure. She said Ms. Tran lived in an urban community where folks might gather for a cookout, and some guests might have too much to drink. She said if she lived in a neighborhood where an establishment was causing concerns, at what point do you try to contact that facility or that owner to protect your own investment. She said if she lived in a community and somebody was misbehaving, she would try to approach that situation and figure out how that relationship could be changed. Mr. Carter said when they (the Masons) had a meeting there, they were not allowed to drink. He said the Masons were a very large organization, and had big meetings and building was so small. He said intoxication was not what was going on. He said he got so many letters he went and talked to them and suggested they reach out to their neighbors. Ms. Carter said people who didn't look like you - you couldn't associate bad behavior with a certain group of people. She said maybe it was going to take them (Taste of Rondo) to bring the neighborhood together and build understanding.

Ms. Tran said she was not opposing the business but didn't understand the liquor license and wanted to attend the hearing to hear their story. She said she was never contacted by the Carters and this was the first experience she'd had about the business.

Ms. Carter said they wanted to work closely with neighbors, and were available any time if there were questions or concerns; she said they wanted to be in the neighborhood for a long time. Ms. Tran said she was glad she had come to the hearing to hear the Carter's story and was supportive and looking forward to the opening of the business.

Ms. Vang noted that Ms. Tran had previously sent an email of objection.

Chris Fischer (901 Carroll Avenue) said he was in support of just a restaurant license if it didn't include liquor, and still felt the same way, notwithstanding the things he'd heard in the hearing. He said the negative impacts of liquor were in their community now, and while the Carters didn't intend to operate like the Pioneer Club, all he saw was a plan, and the reality was what neighbors were dealing with now. He said they had met with the Pioneer Club, along with DSI, St. Paul police, and Councilmember Thao's office for the last year and a half to two years. He said the Pioneer Club had cleaned up a little but it hadn't materially changed the impact to the community. He said he questioned adding another bar... (interrupted) Mr. Carter said theirs was a restaurant... Mr. Fischer said adding another restaurant with a liquor license was not something he could support; he would support it as a restaurant and seeing how it went until there was a certain level of comfort in the community before adding the liquor license. Mr. Fischer asked Mr. Fischbach how many liquor licenses were granted in primarily residential areas in the last year or five years. Mr. Fischbach said he was not sure, but it was more common now than historically. He said prior to 2015 or 2016 they had a different method of issuing liquor licenses, with a certain number allotted to each ward; he described the changes in requirements related to new liquor licenses issued to restaurants. Ms. Carter noted that a copy of the requirements was included in their sharable business plan. Mr. Fischbach said the requirements were included in the license conditions.

Mr. Fischer said he hadn't received a flier from the Carters about the restaurant. Mr. Carter asked Mr. Fischer how long he had lived in the neighborhood. Mr. Fischer said he'd lived there for two years. Mr. Carter said Mr. Fischer probably wasn't there yet when did the sent-out flyers. Mr. Fischer asked if there was a requirement for consent from a certain percentage of neighbors. Mr. Fischbach and Ms. Vang said that it didn't apply here. Mr. Fischbach said the only separation requirement was a 300-foot separation from a school. Mr. Fischer provided a print-out of a code citation. Mr. Fischbach asked whether Mr. Fischer was referring to the extension of liquor to the outside; he provided Mr. Fischer with a hand out with those requirements. Mr. Fischer asked what kind of consent was required and whether it was only required for outside. Mr. Fischbach said yes; he described the process and said it would require new public notice. He said for inside liquor there was just a separation requirement from schools requiring their signature. Mr. Fischer asked about the liquor license at that location prior to 2012 or 2013. Mr. Carter said it had been an American Legion since the 1960s or 70s. Mr. Fischbach said it was a Liquor On Sale – Club license. Mr. Fischer asked about Big Jazz Kickstand. Mr. Carter said Big Jazz Kickstand was a private club; they never obtained a liquor license for, and if they wanted to do events they had to obtain a temporary liquor license. Mr. Fischbach said there had been no temporary liquor licenses issued in 2018 because they were in transition; they were issued eleven temporary licenses in 2017 and twelve in 2016.

Ms. Carter said Mr. Fischer moved to the neighborhood in 2017, and the establishment had had responsible management since then, and anything else would be hearsay.

Ms. Vang asked Mr. Fischbach to review any enforcement actions taken and the process necessary to trigger an investigation. Mr. Fischbach said Mr. Fischer had been working with the Pioneer Club so he was familiar with the enforcement process. Mr. Fischer asked whether a liquor license was automatically renewed yearly as long as the license fee was paid. Mr. and Ms. Carter said they believed it was reviewed. Mr. Fischer said there had been problems with the Pioneer Club, and he'd never been apprised of any sort of public review at the time of their renewal. Mr. Carter asked if there was a way they could earn Mr. Fischer's respect. Ms. Carter said they had been fighting this for so long and had had to work so hard to dispel the negativity that had been associated with others. She said reading the emotionally-charged letter submitted by Mr. Morales had made her feel defensive; she apologized to Mr. Fischer. Mr. Fischer said from his point of view, there wasn't a lot that the Carters could say to change his mind, and that's why he supported getting a restaurant license and getting a feel for how it was going to impact the community, and then apply for the liquor license a year or two later. Mr. Carter asked if it would make a difference if it was a Timberlodge or Best Steak House or something Mr. Fischer was familiar with. Mr. Fischer said he supposed, in the sense that he would have confidence in their processes and procedures that were in place. Mr. Carter said he felt he was being labeled as a Pioneer rather than as a businessman or a Dixie's or a Timberlodge. Mr. Fischer said essentially, he would have to take Mr. Carter at his word.

In response to Mr. Fischer's asking to approve the restaurant over a liquor license, Ms. Vang said St. Paul lost the ability to license restaurants a long time ago, and the only thing before her was the liquor license for her consideration. She said she understood there were a lot of emotions but can only review what has been brought forward for her assessment.

Ms. Carter said they respected and understood Mr. Fischer's concerns. She said if she lived in a neighborhood with something that was causing her headaches, she'd be reluctant to give her blessing to something she was not fully on board with. She said they'd had 23 temporary licenses in the time Mr. Fischer had been there, had managed responsibly. She said they had to re-apply every time and meet insurance and security requirements, and at every time, all of which indicated they valued their neighbors. She said the footprint at the Pioneer was nothing compared to the footprint of their building, and the Pioneer didn't have the ability to invest the type of money they were bringing to the table with Taste of Rondo. She said they had invested \$500,000, and were not going to let anyone mess up their return on their investment. She said they were not there to disrupt Mr. Fischer's norm, but did want to help him understand that all Black people weren't the same. She said they were just trying to make some money and support their family just like anybody else. Mr. Carter asked whether Mr. Fischer lived within 300 feet of the restaurant. Mr. Fischer said he was more. Mr. Carter spoke about the enthusiastic support of a close neighbor and said all the neighbors within 300 feet were supportive. Mr. Fischer said he believed there was a letter submitted from that neighbor's wife. Ms. Vang said she didn't have a record of receiving it. Mr. Fischer said some of the residents were concerned with the liquor license.

Ms. Vang said what she was hearing was that Mr. Fischer didn't want to have to call the police if there were problems. Mr. Carter said that was the Pioneer Club. He said he would give Mr.

Fischer his business card and encouraged Mr. Fischer to call him directly with concerns. Ms. Carter asked how Mr. Fischer would know where problems were coming from. Ms. Vang said that type of interaction should be treated as an inquiry from concerned residents and not have it be treated like an attack. Mr. Fischer said he could tell when problems were coming from the Pioneer Club because when they were shut down for the night or not open... (interrupted). Mr. Carter asked Mr. Fischer whether he lived near the Pioneer Club. Mr. Fischer said he lived very close. Ms. Carter said it appeared Mr. Fischer's distaste for a liquor license was based on the Pioneer Club. Mr. Fischer said that was primarily correct. Ms. Carter said she wasn't going to let anything mess up her investment and would ensure that the business was responsibly managed.

Ms. Vang said she would not read Mr. Fischer's letter into the record since he had testified.

Leon Daisy (265 N. Chatsworth Street) said the neighborhood took care of the neighborhood, and when there were problems with the America Legion, it was neighbors that worked with police and came up with a plan. He said they made sure their voices were being heard. He said why look at the worst things that could happen, and why not have an open mind about the good that could happen. He said if the neighbors were that concerned they should get together with the rest of the neighbors. He suggested establishing a community board that could meet with the Carters regularly.

William Moore (176 Faye Street) said he was impressed with Mr. and Ms. Carter's diligence and willingness to listen, and he would patronize the business.

Ms. Carter read letter from Peter Morales (971 Iglehart) into the record. Mr. Morales expressed concerns about gun discharges at the location, and instances of problems at the Pioneer Club. He cited gunfire, noise, and obstruction of traffic.

Mr. Carter said he was not aware of that level of problems in the neighborhood. Mr. Daisy said it was not accurate.

Ms. Vang said the neighbor raised questions about something that was concerning to them, and it was unfortunate that Mr. and Ms. Carter had inherited the history associated with the previous business; however, she wanted to note that they keep those valid concerns in mind for how they manage their business.

Ms. Carter said she was concerned that some of the facts she had read out loud were misconstrued and biased. Mr. Carter said he wished Mr. Morales had been present; he could have gotten another perspective. Ms. Vang said Mr. Morales raised the issue of noise from patrons leaving the establishment, and that was something that could be discussed.

Ms. Carter asked whether the possible noise from Allianz Field had been addressed with neighbors, and said she felt like they were getting into the backlash of so many different disgruntled situations. She said Dixie's was in a residential neighborhood, and there were no problems or fighting related to liquor. She said Dixie's had invested in their business just like they intended to. Mr. Carter said there would be 20-25 professional, trained employees. Ms.

Carter said they were leaving their jobs to bring value to the neighborhood and help build economic development, and it was instrumental to have liquor with food to boost the revenue.

Mr. Carter asked whether Mr. Morales lived within 300 feet of the establishment. Ms. Carter said he was two blocks away and closer to the Pioneer, and people had to take their crosses up with the issue-maker. Mr. Carter said initially his biggest fight was with history from the American Legion; he noted the previously mentioned positive changes at Selby and Dale Street, and said their business was bringing something positive to Rondo. He said most of the people who were in the neighborhood when there were problems didn't live there anymore, and the people who lived there now were like the people writing the letters. Ms. Carter said she grew up in Frogtown and her family was embedded in the fabric of the Rondo neighborhood. She said it was important that they flourish and pick up the baton from the people who did positive things in the neighborhood. She said the project had been vetted through the permit, zoning, and licensing processes, and they had worked hard on and were committed to the details of the business plan. Mr. Carter said the community had worked hard with them.

Ms. Vang said she would read the remaining letters into the record and allow the opportunity for response from the applicants. She read from an email from Margaret Metzdorff, representing the Capitol City Townhomes. They expressed support for the restaurant but not the liquor license, and expressed concerns about the increase in drug and alcohol issues, and challenges raised by the presence of hard liquor license in a neighborhood already facing challenges. She said, when questioned by a neighbor a year ago, Mr. Carter had said he wasn't responsible for the behavior of people outside the establishment.

Mr. Carter said they weren't open last year and he had never been approached by a lady with questions; he said a lot of the letters seemed to be pure stereotype. Ms. Carter said Ms. Metzdorff probably didn't even live on-site. Mr. Carter said he had heard from supporters in the neighborhood that someone was spreading false information. Ms. Carter said information was being spread by a neighborhood email group made up of people outside of the notifications area. Ms. Vang said the neighbors were just expressing concerns and wanted to understand how Taste of Rondo was going to be operating as a restaurant that served liquor. Ms. Carter said the business plan was their bible, and they couldn't deviate from it. She said they wanted neighbors to be their customers.

Ms. Vang read a letter from Evelyn Mouacheupao at 914 Concordia expressing support for the establish without alcohol initially, with the possibility a discussion of a liquor license later if the neighborhood felt safe. Mr. Carter again referenced a chain of people teaming up together without complete information and stereotyping. He said the letters sounded the same, asking for no liquor license; he noted that Ms. Mouacheupao's address was next to the Pioneer. Ms. Carter said this already was an opportunity to discuss the issue of liquor on-site; she asked how many years it would take to gain the neighbors' trust.

Ms. Vang read an email from Lisa Khang at 914 Concordia objecting to the liquor license. Mr. and Ms. Carter noted that the two emails were from the same address. Ms. Vang said all correspondence was accepted. She said Ms. Khang supported the establishment without alcohol

and was open to the discussion in the future. Ms. Carter said it appeared that Ms. Khang had copied Ms. Mouacheupao's email, and there was a template going around. Mr. Fischer noted that the letters of support in the business plan were also copied and pasted from a template.

Ms. Vang read a letter from Amanda Mickelson expressing support for the establishment but concern about the City's inability to enforce current regulations on other establishments in the neighborhood with liquor licenses, and the crime and danger it brought to the neighborhood. Ms. Mickelson wrote that she would support re-evaluating a liquor license after trust was built with the neighborhood. She cited specific problems associated with the Pioneer Club. Mr. Carter said it sounded like another in the chain of letters. Ms. Carter noted the number of times the Pioneer Club was mentioned in the letter. She said it was unfortunate that people were unwilling to give them (Taste of Rondo Restaurant) a chance.

Mr. Carter said he was the Taste of Rondo and not the Pioneer Club. He said he had met members of the Pioneer Club and was told they had weekly meetings and people stood outside but were not intoxicated or selling drugs. He said he felt if they were that violent, they wouldn't be open. Ms. Vang said work was being done to work with the Pioneer Club, and it was going to be important for Mr. and Ms. Carter to demonstrate to the neighbors that they were different.

Mr. Daisy said he was a member of the Pioneer Lodge, and they we didn't have that kind of activity going on. He said they may stand outside and talk, but didn't have shooting or burning up cars (as was mentioned in Mr. Morales email).

Ms. Vang referred to property records and noted complaints about rubbish and trash; she asked about plans for handling trash. Mr. Carter said since the building had been unoccupied there had been a problem with dumping, but when they were open, they'd have staff clean up and pick up trash daily. He said he'd been working to get over there to clean up. Ms. Carter said a neighbor had witnessed another neighbor leaving a couch in their parking lot.

Ms. Vang asked whether they would have a plan; she asked if there were bins outside. Mr. Carter said now it was just a vacant building. Ms. Carter said they'd filled a 20-yard dumpster gutting the building, but when they opened they would have trash removal contracted.

Ms. Vang said as far as illegal dumping, she asked that they think of ways to ensure it was not readily visible. Mr. Carter said they would have a 10-yard on site all the time. He referred to the site plan and said there would be a door on the side of the building that went right to the bin. Mr. Carter said trash removal was regulated by MDH restaurant requirements. Ms. Carter said the bin would be enclosed.

Ms. Vang asked whether staff would be trained not to empty bottles at night; she said there had been issues with noise like that (at other establishments). Mr. Carter said they people they were hiring would be experienced. Ms. Carter said they would discard glass and aluminum at reasonable hours.

Ms. Vang noted that they had been closed for two years, and there had been no police incidents.

Ms. Vang said overall, she was impressed with the Carters' plan and felt it would be a good addition to the community. She said it was unfortunate that they inherited that history, but they were aware of it and would be working hard to change the perception. She encouraged them to train staff that they were in a restaurant in the middle of a residential area, and neighbors would be monitoring. She encouraged them to do a good job of managing staff and patrons, especially as they exited. She noted that they could be open until midnight but the planned hours of operation were until 10:30 p.m. She asked that they be cognizant that they were in a residential neighborhood and noise was a concern. She asked that they utilize the police department for issues involving the safety of patrons and staff. She asked about security cameras. Mr. Carter said there were cameras up now. Ms. Vang asked about lighting. Mr. Carter said the building was being made over. Ms. Carter said they were going to make sure they did it in a respectful way, so the light was not directly shining on neighbors. Ms. Vang confirmed that they were working with the City on that. Mr. Carter said there would be plenty of lighting.

Ms. Vang confirmed that they didn't plan to pull permits until the license was issued. She said she didn't have anything else to add other than that the issues raised in the hearing were valid. She said she hadn't heard anything to warrant additional conditions on the license other than those recommended by DSI, or any basis to deny the license, so she would be issuing a recommendation that the City Council issue the license with the agreed upon conditions.

Ms. Carter thanked Ms. Vang for her time and her recommendation, and said it was their responsibility to uphold the conditions 100%.

Ms. Vang explained the next steps. She said normally it took four to six weeks for her to complete the record to present to the City Council and brief the Council member. She said the resolution would normally come before the Council on the Consent Agenda.

The hearing adjourned at 4:44 p.m.

The Conditions Affidavit was signed and submitted on April 25, 2019.