

LICENSE HEARING MINUTES
Pizza Maya, 1324 7th St W
Thursday, November 20, 2:00 PM
Room 330 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Boulevard West
Nhia Vang, Legislative Hearing Officer

The hearing was called to order at 2:03 PM

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

Licensee: Naveen Shrestha, Owner; Steve Johnson, Building Contractor

License Application: Liquor On Sale 101-180 seats and Liquor On Sale - Sunday 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:

Ashley Skarda, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) - Licensing, gave a staff report for licensee NS LLC, (License ID# DSIBLIQ 000216-2025), d/b/a Pizza Maya, located at 1324 7th St W. The application is for Liquor On Sale 101-180 seats and Liquor On Sale - Sunday 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 patron/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.

The District 9 Fort Road Federation was informed of the application by the applicant. Building conditions, in process; Licensing approved with conditions; Zoning approved.

YaYa Diatta, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) - Zoning, gave a staff report. The area is zoned T2 – Traditional Neighborhood. This is a permitted use. There are no parking minimum requirements for this application.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is there attached parking?

Naveen Shrestha: There are 9 attached parking spaces.

Skarda: The parking is behind the building off Victoria St.

Shrestha: The parking is for customers only.

Hearing Officer Vang: Where are your trash bins?

Shrestha: Inside the building.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is the parking lot lit?

Shrestha: Yes. The lighting is powerful and provides good visibility.

Diatta: The City has lighting regulations regarding dimness and shielding. Please keep that in mind.

Hearing Officer Vang: Does the owner need to contact DSI Zoning to get their lighting approved?

Diatta: We are more reactive. If there is a complaint, we will investigate and take measurements. If there is an issue, we will issue instructions for compliance.

Steve Johnson: I'm with the contractor for the work that was done, and a lighting test was conducted to show there is a zero output upon leaving the property line. That result is on file with the City.

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

Shrestha: We demolished the old structure and built a new building. I own the building and the business.

Hearing Officer Vang: Did you do a new curb cut for loading and unloading?

Shrestha: Everything has been worked out.

Johnson: The curb cut was existing on Victoria, and two were removed on 7th St. There will be 4 trees going into the boulevard as part of our development plan. An arborist helped plan that, along with other plantings and rain garden with chambers filter out different debris. Shrestha will maintain them by removing trash that gets caught in them.

Hearing Officer Vang: How big are the chambers?

Johnson: 6 feet deep.

Skarda: They can be opened to be cleaned out.

Johnson: It used to be all hard surface and this is better for the community.

Hearing Officer Vang: How does snow affect the rain garden?

Johnson: Snow can be plowed into it.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is it fenced?

Johnson: There is an ornamental fence that goes up to the neighbor's chain link fence.

Shrestha: The neighbor is excited about the business. He would have come today if he was able.

Hearing Officer Vang asked about hours, staffing, patio usage.

Shrestha: Our hours will be 11am – 10pm. The patio is an indoor patio open year-round and is included in the 101-180 seats. The building is about 10,000 square feet. This business is about 3,000 square feet, plus about 1,200 square feet for the indoor patio. There will be 1 or 2 tenants in the remaining space. The indoor patio is not a common area. It's only for the pizza place.

Johnson: It has a rolling garage door facing 7th, doors in the front and back, and 3 skylights. You can feel like you're outside without being outside.

Shrestha: Seating is about 105 or 108. The patio table number and style are still to be determined. Other tenants will not have access to the patio.

Hearing Officer Vang: When is construction complete?

Johnson: The goal is to complete by January 1.

Shrestha: I want to open in February, after training in staff.

Hearing Officer Vang: How many staff will you have?

Shrestha: 3-5 kitchen staff. Front house will have a food runner and two bartenders. It will be 10-15 people total. I will try to hire from within the community. I plan to have neighborhood kids in high school or college running food.

Hearing Officer Vang: Are the hours consistent throughout the week?

Shrestha: Yes. We will be open 7 days per week.

Hearing Officer Vang: Will you be doing liquor manual training?

Skarda: This is the owner's third restaurant, so they may not need it. We will provide the liquor manual but probably don't need to read through it together.

Shrestha: I will be working with a company that trains staff on liquor service as well. I think the acronym is TIPS.

Hearing Officer Vang: What are your other two businesses?

Shrestha: Highland Café on Ford Pkwy and formerly Chips Clubhouse, which is now Indian kitchen, on Snelling Ave.

Hearing Officer Vang: Will you have a separate manager on site?

Shrestha: I have a manager at Highland Café and they are only open for breakfast and lunch. I'm not really involved with Indian Kitchen either, so I will be on site at this location along with a manager. I've been in the restaurant business for 30 years and have managed liquor at other businesses.

Hearing Officer Vang: When is trash picked up?

Shrestha: 3-4 times a week for food and recycling.

Hearing Officer Vang: How often are deliveries?

Shrestha: We have good sized storage and will probably start out with deliveries once per week. The delivery trucks aren't noisy either.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is there a designated smoking spot?

Shrestha: No. I've never had an issue with that with other businesses. We will also have cameras to monitor what goes on outside.

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

Shrestha: No.

[Skarda explained the process for receiving and resolving complaints at DSI.]

Hearing Officer Vang: When did construction work start?

Shrestha: We bought the property in 2023 and had a lot of difficulties with contractors and cleanup.

Skarda: They did site plan review twice and had a few changes made to their plan over time.

Hearing Officer Vang: Where are building permits at?

Skarda: They're getting there.

Johnson: The brick front is being put in.

Shrestha: It's better than the mattresses and trash that used to be there.

Skarda: Two other development attempts fell through, first with townhomes and then with family dollar. Family Dollar wanted to use the 7th St curb cuts to allow semi-trailers to drive straight through for deliveries, which doesn't align with the area's zoning.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do you have any questions?

Shrestha: I own this lot and the one next door. For the other lot, can I put a parking lot there? It's empty right now. I was told it was residential and a could put a four-plex there, but I don't want to do that.

Skarda: I think it's a split-zoned area.

Grace Wagner: It's H2 residential.

Skarda: Could they apply to PED to rezone it to T2 to allow a parking lot?

Diatta: Yes. They would have to rezone.

Johnson: We were aware of that and are planning that for the future. We just wanted to get the business going first. The car wash may lease space from it.

Shrestha: The neighbors said they would help turn that into parking.

Johnson: The goal is to get neighborhood support for the parking lot and then come back to work on it next summer. We would want to then combine them into one property ID. No one can use that other space right now.

Shrestha: Should I apply for the rezoning right now?

Skarda: Yes. DSI can connect you with the city planner for your area, if need be.

Hearing Officer Vang next read into the record the two letters from Susan Sattler, which raised concerns about safety, traffic, parking, nearby bars, trash, trees, lighting, and the public notice period. She then gave the applicant the opportunity to respond.

Johnson: I understand the concerns. We went through a very long process on this, though. We had 48 people in site plan review meetings.

Skarda: Regarding bars, there aren't a lot of bars nearby besides Bennet's. The ones near the hockey arena are also able to stay open later. Regarding parking, street parking is allowed and not metered. Regarding traffic and vehicle counts, I think Public Works keeps data on traffic flow, but I don't know where they do it or at what frequency they collect it.

Hearing Officer Vang: For trees, are there more trees than before?

Johnson: There are 4 along the boulevard, two on 7th St and two on Victoria St. For emergency vehicles, the road is designed for two-way traffic and parking, so it's plenty wide.

Skarda: Fire inspectors can also ask engineers to prove that the city's largest fire truck can access the space. Also, for the notice period, the code was updated a few years ago to go from 45 days to 15 days for neighborhood notification on liquor service applications. I understand the concerns, though.

Hearing Officer Vang: Notice was also properly given for this hearing.

Skarda: Also, Licensing Manager Eric Hudak talked to her over the phone yesterday afternoon.

Johnson: For the lighting concern, we did a photometric plan during site plan review and all the light is staying on the property.

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. 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 patron/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.

The hearing adjourned at 3:03 PM.

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