

Dear ALRC members,

I would be attending the hearing tonight but just had surgery this morning - so please accept my written comments in lieu of attendance at tonight's hearing. I strongly object to granting an alcohol license to the Double S BBQ applicants. Please consider my perspective below.

I am writing as a taxpayer, a neighborhood parent, a member of the Vilas Neighborhood Association in District 13, and a resident with a home that backs on to the commercial alley in the 1800 block of Monroe Street (my address is 1808 Madison St). I have never before written in objection or protest to any liquor license or other zoning issue in our neighborhood. I love living in the Monroe St neighborhood and bought and renovated a house here because I like the urban feel of the neighborhood, including the businesses on Monroe St. I am a frequent shopper at Orange Tree, have my hair cut at Baci, buy glasses at Eyeopia, baby gifts at Wild Child, hold meetings at Crescendo and Barrique's, use the Neuhauser Pharmacy, am a frequent diner at Pizza Bruta, and more. In other words, I am an enthusiastic supporter of all of the area businesses. (The exception to this is Pasquale's: more on this later). Most of the business owners on Monroe Street are good neighbors and we know each other by sight if not by name.

My house, garage and yard backs on to the business alley behind all of these businesses. Over the past two or three years, the commercial traffic in the alley - delivery trucks and employee cars - has grown exponentially. This has been especially true since Crescendo, the Irish bar/restaurant and Pasquale's have moved in. With the increase of delivery truck traffic it is almost impossible to count on getting in and out of my garage during certain hours of the day. Loud trucks idle and unload, blocking access to my garage and stopping all movement in the alley. Since Pasquale's and the Irish bar moved in, we have had a noticeable increase in traffic and parking on our Madison St block, as well as loud drunken people in front of our house. We have had one rape in the alley and numerous break-ins in the businesses behind our house (most recently the Sewcial, a business that moved out after the robbery). We have been vandalized three times in the last two years. In the worst case, someone tore all of the flowers out of our perennial bed in the front yard and tore out bushes as well as leaving debris all over the front yard. We assume this was a drunk bar patron, since my son heard someone in the front yard at bar closing time. On a more minor basis, we often hear loud and/or drunk people walking to their cars, and on more than one occasion, I have had to ask people not to urinate in our yard.

As nice as business owners may be, they cannot control the actions of their patrons. The only way to make sure that a given block or neighborhood is not overwhelmed with diners/drinkers is to control the number of alcohol permits awarded.

I can handle things as they are - but we just can't take any more. We have reached the limit of endurance with alcohol licensed businesses on our block.

Added to that, the prospect of having a 20 foot food smoker outside in the alley - like the one proposed by the proprietors of the Double S BBQ - a few feet away from my garage, is just unimaginable. My neighbors and I went out with a measuring tape after the last meeting with the BBQ owners at Hotel Red. The smoker would come to the very edge of the parking pad behind the proposed restaurant site. It is on a steep pitch. It will further add to the congestion in the alley. We are terribly worried about the potential for fire (there will be cars from other businesses tightly parked right next to their fire pit every day), as well as smoke and other carcinogenic and environmental hazards it will cause. Beyond these frightening hazards, the prospect of living next to a meat smoker and having the permeating lingering odor of smoking meat in our yard and windows every day is just not acceptable.

Our block is already dealing with Pasquale's rattly fan and rancid odor - which we have raised as a problem on numerous occasions to our present and past alders without any result. Pasquale's has a loud dirty incessant fan and spews a lingering unattractive odor, albeit one that is apparently not as pervasive as BBQ. Already, the neighbors who must endure this odor and noise cannot fathom how anyone could possibly eat there; from our standpoint, Pasquale's adds nothing but noise, drunken drivers and a bad smell to the neighborhood. The owner has refused to take any action in spite of repeated conversations and entreaties from the neighbors. We have had the city go out to measure the fan noise, and it is a decibel or two below the level required to take legal action against the owner. So we literally have a "bad taste" in our mouths from the Pasquale's experience. And as a result, we have little trust in the promises of the Double S BBQ owners, who seem like very sweet people but who we believe are not being either realistic or factual about the impact of their proposed restaurant on our neighborhood. They admitted in the meeting that the ideal situation would be to build a cement smoke house that would contain the odor and smoke - but that they can't afford to do that. So apparently they plan to smoke their food outside in the middle of a highly congested alley.

You can prevent this from happening. I hope you will do the right thing and deny the liquor license. They would be better off locating in a less congested neighborhood with off-street parking, somewhere where they can contribute to the community and be more appreciated.

Sincerely,

Anne Hansen