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Minocqua Brewing Company Conditional Use Application
2927 East Washington Avenue

LETTER OF INTENT

CC: Kirk Bangstad (owner Minocqua Brewing Company)
Jenny Kirchgatter (Assistant Zoning Administrator, City of Madison)

INTRODUCTION

The Minocqua Brewing Company intends to build a new "Tasting Room" facility at 2927 East Washington Avenue, Madison Wisconsin. This submission is being made on behalf of Kirk Bangstad of the Minocqua Brewing Company.

This project is a tenant build-out, to occupy an existing vacant space in a 3-tenant strip mall. Previous use of the currently vacant tenant space was a tavern (Growlers to Go), which maintained a full bar and seating for approximately 25-30 patrons. The facility is anchored by Trixie's Liquor Store on the East side of the facility, and Lend Nation on the West side of the facility. The existing facility is served by a 24 space parking lot, and has a fenced in rear yard courtyard with a 2 stall garage outbuilding, and a grass filled square. The building has gone over many renovations over decades of a mix of business occupancy and has a mix of construction types blended together. The primary structure of the tenant space in question is a concrete block wall and steal open web truss roof. There is a traditional extruded aluminum storefront window pair with a mix of vision and spandrel glass panels. A traditionally glazed storefront door allows access to the front of the store, and a single exit door offers access to the rear courtyard. The tenant space is measured as 910 square feet.

BUSINESS AND HISTORY

Founded as a restaurant and micro brewery combination during the early 2000's in Downtown Minocqua, Wisconsin, The Minocqua Brewing Company was housed in a former masonic temple that served as a home for the business for several decades. Current owner, Kirk Banstad (with his late wife, Elizabeth Smith), purchased and operated the successful business in 2016 through 2020, when the Covid-19 outbreak made it's way into the Northwoods. As most hospitality business of that time, few were able to survive the lockdowns during the busiest times of tourist season. Minocqua Brewing was no different, and in late 2020 Bangstad sold the Minocqua Brewing Company restaurant building (but retained his brewing license and his business name).

Without the restaurant, Kirk went on to "re-launch" his company into an exclusive branded brewing business. It was during this time that Bangstad became more active with political activism and the new Minocqua Brewing Company emerged with various craft beer lines being launched with political themes being using colorful labels and catchy branding to generate business awareness and growth. In 2022, The Minocqua Brewing company restored and opened a retail outlet in Minocqua, occupying a historic gas station which the company saved and then listed on the State and National Register of Historic Buildings. In leveraging various brewing relationships around the State, Kirk has been able to offer Statewide Distribution of his products, and has delved into larger National distribution efforts and online sales. He also has been broadening his product line with branded sodas, coffee's and wines, and clothing merchandise through various craft partnerships and collaborations.

VISION AND INTENTION

The Minocqua Brewing Company is allowed, per it's State Brewing License, two retail/serving locations that it owns and operates to distribute and serve its own products. The first facility is the Minocqua Retail site. The second allowed facility is visioned to be this Madison location.

It is the intention of the Minocqua Brewing Company to convert the existing vacant tenant space (former Growlers to Go tavern) into its new “Tasting Room” facility. This 910 SF interior space would be renovated to accommodate a lounge style seating area for 25-30 patrons, a second ADA qualified restroom, coolers to offer retail products for sale, company merchandise displays, and a tap-wall serving the products of the company fresh from a keg to be enjoyed on-site. The facility would also include a new 1-barrel brewing system, which would be located in back of the tenant building, in a newly built “Brewing House” building of approximately 90 SF. This small brewing operation would be used for small batches of products featured at the facility, experimental flavors, and collaborative projects with other area craft brewers. The facility brews its beer offsite through contracted relationships and no large-scale production or packaging would occur at this site. An existing walk-in cooler will re-used from the previous tavern-use, and relocated to the building exterior as well, enclosed with an open-air, canopy covered, structure to secure and screen equipment.

Per the brand’s political labels, the space will reflect a place for dialogue to be shared of political topics of the day. It is envisioned that this place becomes a place for common people to enjoy beer among various political personalities and leaders in the community. A place for the community to celebrate itself and the beer that celebrates their point of view.
The facility is proposed to be operated 11am-9pm Wednesdays-Saturdays, 11am-6pm Sundays-Tuesdays. It is to be staffed between 2-4 people (based on needs).

There is also a desire to host small events like fundraisers and community meetings, offer potential food truck options, etc. However – it is clearly understood that these events and promotions may have to be approved with the City of Madison in advance, and it would be the intent of the Minocqua Brewing Company to attain all proper permits and permissions to host such activities at the business location.

PROCESSES AND TIMELINE

The Development team has been selected, the concepts have been vetted. A lease is undergoing fine tuning negotiation and will be pending the successful execution of permit approvals from the City of Madison. The project will be fast-tracked within the accepted rules of entitlements and approvals of the City of Madison. It is the goal to begin our tenant build-out as soon as building permits are in-hand, and expect the actual construction to be a simple 4-6 week process as our building modifications are very simple construction propositions.

To help expedite our review process, we have attained permission from District 15 Alder Dina Nina Martinez-Rutherford to waive the 30-day notification requirement. The development team has also conducted it’s pre-application meeting with City Staff (Sept 25). Our next steps to expedite our process will be to begin work on our building permit submission in tandem with the planning review process. We are also concurrently beginning our signage designs to begin that discrete process as well. It is our hope that all the entitlement process items can converge near a similar approval date such we can move forward quickly with our permitting.

The goal is to be open before year’s end of 2023.

THE FUTURE

It must be noted that the location selection for Minocqua Brewing Company was largely made considering its future. The 2927 East Washington location offers a number of expansion and growth opportunities and room to improve the facility over time. At any expansion point, the development team would revisit the Building, Planning and Zoning staffs of the City of Madison for guidance and approval processes.

It is certain that if the Minocqua Brewing Company is allowed to have this conditional use, that it will commit itself to the property and the neighborhood and community which it will serve.

Best professional regards,

Christopher Max Naumann; AIA, ALA, NCARB 10/02/23
Project Architect, President
Christopher Max Design & Development LLC.