

CAPITOL

NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.
MADISON, WISCONSIN

April 17, 2012

Mr. Brad Murphy
Planning Unit
City of Madison
215 Martin Luther King Blvd.
Madison, WI 53703

Re: 554 W. Main St. – Echo Tap

Dear Brad,

The proprietors of the Echo Tap have presented information regarding their proposals for changes at a regular monthly meeting of the Bassett Neighborhood on February 13th as well as to a special larger neighborhood meeting called by Alder Verveer on March 1st.

At both meetings residents were generally supportive of the changes that are proposed. On the question of hours of use for the outdoor patio there is a mix of feelings which are addressed below. At the February Bassett meeting a motion was approved to indicate that those in attendance supported the patio expansion and seasonal structure. This was done with the understanding that the larger neighborhood meeting to solicit input from a broader range of residents was yet to occur.

There were four specific changes discussed at these meetings which will be addressed separately.

1. Approval of the existing changes to the exterior facades in lieu of the the facades previously approved.

The neighborhood recognizes that during construction a situation arose which did not allow the originally approved exterior façade modifications and addition to the building to be completed. A minor alteration on a temporary basis was approved with façade modifications to allow construction to continue. For reasons that remain unclear the current exterior of the building does not match either version of approved plans.

Residents feel that the current building exterior is an improvement over the preconstruction version of the building. Some have stated that the originally approved plans would be even better but understand that this is no longer feasible.

Residents of the neighborhood are supportive of approving a modification to the PUD that provides for approval of the current exterior of the building.

2. Installation of a seasonal structure on the patio during cold weather.

A temporary structure is proposed to be erected and removed on the patio seasonally. This structure is intended to provide a space for those wishing to smoke to do so in a setting protected from the weather. The use of this structure may also reduce the numbers of people smoking along the sidewalk. Specific dates for putting up and taking down this structure were not presented or discussed. A concern was raised that a sheltered location could increase the numbers of people outside during the regular bar hours which has the potential to become a noise issue for adjacent properties.

Residents of the neighborhood are supportive of an approval for a seasonal structure at the patio.

3. Expansion of the size of the exterior patio.

The proposal is to more than double the size of the outdoor patio. When the Echo Tap brought their original proposal to the neighborhood in 2011 the statement was made that the only access for patrons to the patio would be from within the building. The patio was intended as a place where people could take food and beverages purchased within the building. As such there was no gate providing ready access to the patio along the sidewalk. Similar information was provided in the application to the ALRC.

The current proposal shows a second gate at the corner near the sidewalk. The representation has been that this gate would only be used at times with larger outdoor crowds. This gate would be staffed in a similar manner to the main entrance.

Residents of the neighborhood are supportive of the proposed expansion of the exterior patio.

4. Change to hours of operation for the exterior patio.

The applicant has proposed extending the hours of use of the patio by an hour each night of the week. The current restrictions in the conditional use permit are 9:00 PM Sunday – Thursday and 10:00 PM Friday and Saturday. The original hours were suggested by the neighborhood due to concerns about the potential for noise and in deference to the residential structures adjacent to the Echo. Though the patio was completed and open for only a limited time during the warmer months of last year the hours appear to have worked from a neighborhood perspective in that there were limited noise complaints.

There is a mix of feelings among residents regarding expansion of the hours. Doubling the size of the patio and the number of people present could result in considerably more noise. Since there are several residential buildings immediately adjacent to the patio many residents felt extending the hours was not appropriate. Other residents expressed that by living downtown this is the type of atmosphere one should expect. It was also noted that proper management could reduce / prevent excessive noise regardless of the hours. Note that the patio can be used by patrons

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without food or drink at anytime during the normal operations. The current limitations apply to serving food or beverages on the patio or taking such from inside the building to the patio.

During the initial discussion of the patio hours it was suggested that after a season the topic could be revisited and based on that experience extending the hours might be considered. The original hours had a limited test and the current proposal will double the capacity of the patio. If the current hours are continued the neighborhood is willing to evaluate the impact of the expanded patio and operations in the future with regard to changes in the hours of use.

Thank you for your consideration,

Peter Ostlind
Chair Bassett District
Capitol Neighborhoods

Cc: Alder Verveer
ALRC