

# After year wait, 3 businesses get liquor licenses

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Bedford Now

A few Bedford Township business owners are breathing a sigh of relief after a long liquor license application process.

Three business owners received the okay from the Michigan Liquor Control Commission last month to receive the much-desired liquor licenses.

"(The process) wasn't as much frustrating as time consuming," said Doug Eisenman, co-owner of Memories Banquet Hall in Temperance with Mary Danielak. "It was essential for our business to get it so we are very happy that we received it."

The process of receiving a liquor license can take up to a year or longer. In August, Bedford Township officials stamped their approval for three local businesses by a voting process. The three licenses could be the last three that the township might see in eight years, depending on the 2010 Census.

The three were chosen from five local businesses vying for the liquor licenses. The board voted and passed three approvals, which then were passed to the Michigan Liquor Control Commission. Besides Memories Banquet Hall, M.T. Loonies and Panda Garden received approval.

"We have learned a lot during this entire process; we didn't realize it could take over a year," said Michelle Bork, co-owner of M.T. Loonies with Patricia West. "This was a huge learning process for the both of us."

"It was very important to get the license because customers like to have some wine with their dinner," said Kwan Cheung, owner of Panda Garden restaurant in Lambertville. "We needed it for our business."

Eisenman already sees the difference the liquor license has

made for his business, which offers two halls for any type of event such as wedding receptions or parties.

"Before the license, people would have to bring their own alcohol," he said about the hall that has been open since 1994. "Now that people are hearing

that we have a bar available, we are receiving an extremely large amount of calls. We have booked a lot more parties, so it's already made a big difference for our business."

Bork, who described the entire procedure as "nerve-racking," believed that the township board

vote was the critical moment of truth.

"I believe the vote passed 5-2 in our favor," she recalled. "Before the vote, we explained why our bar would be beneficial

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M.I. Loonies, a bar, is being built on Lewis Ave, just north of Smith Rd. Construction of the bar is halfway completed.

"We wanted to be open by January but nothing can be done until we had the license," Ms. Bork explained. "Everything begins with the liquor license, then everything else can begin."

After the board approval, the state does an investigation on the owners of the businesses.

"They investigate your financial reports and see if you have any past police reports. They also take your fingerprints," Eisenman said. "I didn't realize how in depth and lengthy the entire process is but I think it's a good thing because you don't want just anybody getting a liquor license."

All three businesses received their licenses in January after the yearlong wait. All the owners believe that the licenses are vital for a thriving business.

## Licenses (cont.)

to the board; we presented our case as best as we could."

She added that the two board members who voted against her upcoming establishment believed that a chain restaurant, instead of a bar, should claim the liquor license.

"We responded to that by explaining that we are local residents trying to start a hometown business," she said.

While Cheung breezed through the township approval with a unanimous vote in favor of his restaurant, Eisenman had a tougher time with the board, which voted 4-3 in favor.

"I didn't expect the vote to be that close; I just didn't understand why they would vote against it," he said. "Their explanation was that, with a hall, you only use it on the weekends; we

wouldn't use it to the fullest potential."

However, Eisenman explained his case and how it would benefit the community.

"We have a capacity of 450 people. So if we had three parties in one weekend at the fullest capacity, that's 1,200 people we're serving," he said.

"A bar open an entire week may not have that many people. I'm not saying we have 1,200 people every weekend, but it is possible to serve that many in just one week."

Overall, all three business owners admitted the experience, and the liquor license, was beneficial.

"We learned a lot about the process and we're just happy to get it," Eisenman said. "It was definitely worth the wait."