



1715 Government Street
Victoria, BC V8W 1Z4

Mayor Lisa Helps and Council
City of Victoria
No.1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

27 September 2021

Re: Liquor Primary Application – 726 Johnson – The Vicious Poodle

Dear Mayor Helps and Council,

The DRA Land Use Committee has reviewed the application for a Liquor Primary Licence:

- The applicant operates an existing Food Primary License with patron participation endorsement under this name;
- Proposed hours of service – 9am to 2am daily;
- The existing total occupant load is 68, the number approved for the previous restaurant at this site. The proposed new total occupant load is 140 people, including a 17-person outdoor patio.

The applicant has been running the Vicious Poodle since June 2020 as a pub style restaurant dedicated to a LGBTQ+ clientele, offering a full menu for lunch, brunch and dinner, and hosting drag shows and other entertainment. While the existing food service would be retained, there is a perceived demand for an adult-only liquor primary venue, especially later in the evening. The applicant notes that this would be the first store-front gay pub on the Island.

The application speaks to how noise concerns are handled and points to a good relationship with residents across the street. Security and prevention of disturbance are noted.

- **DRA LUC members support this application:**

“I see no objection to this specific application as it is the trend today and normalizes and legalizes what is actually happening, namely late night restaurants becoming pubs for a few hours. This was built as and operated as a restaurant for decades (it was a Japanese restaurant for a long time) so the hospitality food service aspect is actually there and operating. To my knowledge there are no other licensed facilities on this block and it is not primarily residential. I welcome other comments but a street level gay bar in Victoria may be a venue whose time has come.”

“In Victoria, as elsewhere, members of the LGBTQ+ community can be subject to discrimination and the risk of violence. A safe, friendly drinking venue should be supported.”

“No particular concerns, though there are new rental units in a restored heritage building on the other side of the street.”

As always, this application raises the general concern about potential radical shifts in business model or if there is a change in ownership:

“I agree with the application. That said, is the application attached to the property or the owner/applicant? The applicant sounds good but if he sells the establishment to someone who wants to convert it to a biker bar...”

And that in turn raises a specific request to the City for updated policy for the Downtown, as more and larger drinking venues are established in an area with a rapidly increasing residential population.

The DRA strongly supports a vibrant Downtown, which includes late night drinking establishments in appropriate locations. Downtown residents are concerned about impacts on their liveability this type of establishment will create and have been patiently awaiting the recommendations of the Alcohol Policy Review conducted in June of 2019. We trust Council will assess this application on the basis of the solutions the policy review was anticipated to provide to support a harmonious co-existence of residents and businesses while upholding residents’ right to quiet enjoyment of their homes. Downtown has been absorbing the majority of residential growth for the region, so Council needs to thoughtfully consider the impacts decisions such this one will have on the quality of life for this rapidly growing community.”

Regards,

Andy Wachtel
For the DRA Land Use Committee