

THE HISTORY OF THE MUNI WAYZATA'S ON AND OFF SALE MUNICIPAL LIQUOR STORES

It is hard to believe Wayzata was ever without its own government, but for the first 29 years, they were governed by the Minnetonka Township Board. It took a few years for the newly platted town (1854) to survive and attract enough settlers to establish their own government.

Early in 1883, they withdrew from the township and twenty-six male residents of Wayzata petitioned the District Court of Hennepin County, State of Minnesota to be incorporated as a village. On March 5, 1883, the request was granted. According to the petition, there were one hundred and seventy-five (175) people living in Wayzata at that time.

On January 1, 1884 the first official election of the village was held in Hedderly's store for the purpose of electing the president and trustees of the Village Board along with a Justice of The Peace, constable, treasurer and recorder. Also on the ballot that day was the first vote on the sale of "spirituous liquor" as a beverage. The vote was "For" or "Against" issuing liquor licenses in the newly incorporated village. The vote tally was 25 Against and 7 For. The Village of Wayzata voted itself "Dry" and the village board closed the saloons, hotel bars and pool halls. Unlike future votes regarding liquor sales in Wayzata which were initiated by the city council, this vote was petitioned by a group of citizens. They may have been folks in opposition to Miles Dickey's "Temperance Society" which had already worked their influence on closing several saloons in the village. The petition asked for a second vote in one year which was also voted down 25 to 10. Surfing through the council meeting minutes, there is no mention of liquor licenses again until 1933.

Fast forward to 1920 and passage of the 18th amendment to the U. S, constitution prohibiting the sale or manufacture of intoxicating liquor throughout America and to 1933 when the 21st amendment repealed the 18th prohibition amendment. (the only amendment to ever be repealed). In March, 1933, just before prohibition ended, Congress attempted to encourage the consumption of less potent alcoholic beverages by passing the "Non-intoxicating Beverage Act which capped liquor at 3.2 percent." On April 4, 1933, with fifty years of a "dry" town behind them, a new Home Rule City Charter (1929) and a Fourth class city classification, the Wayzata City Council issued 3.2 Beer licenses to Harts Café, The Bayview Café, Wayzata Drug, Pettit & Kysor and Hagberg's IGA.

In December, 1933, the 21st amendment was ratified. The same month in 1933, Minnesota passed the Liquor Control Act. This Act was established to regulate the manufacture, distribution, retail sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages in the State of Minnesota.

In 1937, two requests for "liquor licenses" came before the council, Clyde Shaver for a store at 110 Walker Avenue and Jerome Manning, Wayzata Pharmacy (Old Drug at Barry and Lake Street). Both licenses were granted. In subsequent years, Off-Sale liquor licenses were issued to Florence Manning, (Wayzata Pharmacy), Bert Supplee (Community Drug now the Bookcase/Caribou), and Walter Hewitt, Wayzata Liquor Store (where Giannis is today.) In addition, club licenses for both "On and Off Sale" were issued to the Wayzata American Legion Post #118 and Woodhill Country Club.

In 1946, the City Charter was amended to establish a "City Manager" form of government. Eddie Bayuk, former city clerk of Eveleth, Minnesota was selected from a number of applicants. This was a significant change in Wayzata's government and Mr. Bayuk was familiar with

municipal liquor stores as there were several towns on the Iron Range that used this means of raising revenue.

With a \$33,800 annual budget and some pressing needs – a city maintenance garage, new heated Fire Barn and widening Lake Street to accommodate County Road 15 traffic through town--the city of Wayzata was in need of more revenue. City Manager Bayuk, suggested the city council consider the possibility of a municipal off sale liquor store. Although the council could legally act to establish municipal liquor sales, they wanted confirmation from the citizens. The referendum was placed on the ballot December 4, 1945, for an “Off Sale Municipal Liquor Store” but the residents of Wayzata turned it down 171-106.

With the need for the fire barn and maintenance building becoming more pressing every day (the radiator on a fire truck froze up and couldn't get to a fire) and the commuter traffic of County Road 15 clogging Lake Street, the council again took action. At an adjourned meeting of the city council held on Tuesday, April 9, 1947 at 8 P.M., Mayor Craig Shaver left his chair to make a motion and President Pro-Tem Carisch presided over the meeting.

“It was moved by Mayor Shaver and supported by Councilman Hagberg that the City Manager give the public notice of a special election to be held at the City Hall on Tuesday, April 29, 1947, on the proposition of a “Municipal Off Sale Liquor Store”

The foregoing motion was declared carried on the following vote:

Ayes: Councilmen Carisch, Hagberg, Linman, O'Loughlin and Mayor Shaver.

Nayes: none

For the next twenty days, liquor was the talk of the town. There were the young veterans who would like to have an “ON Sale” place to meet friends for a drink. There were the lingering prohibitionists who thought making money from the sale of liquor was neither right nor moral and there were the restaurant owners who saw “On Sale” just around the corner that would stymie all chances of making more money. And then there was the MINNETONKA HERALD, local newspaper with a full length front page editorial “strongly opposed to government competing with private enterprise.” In the April 24th issue, the Herald provided details of the upcoming election. There were now five options to be considered on the ballot. All pertained to raising more revenue. (1)“On & Off Sale Municipal Liquor Store (2)Off /Sale Liquor store (3) Issue “On Sale” liquor licenses to private parties (4) Increase Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes or (5) write in your own option.

Four Hundred and Forty-One (441) votes were cast, one of the largest election turnouts to date. Total population in Wayzata in 1947 was about 1500. The final tally recorded in the City Council minutes of April 30, 1947 was as follows:

<u>Option</u>	<u>Votes Cast</u>
THE CITY SHOULD RAISE MORE REVENUE THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MUNICIPAL “ON AND OFF” SALE LIQUOR STORE.	216
THE CITY SHOULD RAISE MORE REVENUE THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MUNICIPAL “OFF SALE” LIQUOR STORE.	110
THE CITY SHOULD RAISE MORE REVENUE BY ISSUING PRIVATE “ON SALE” LIQUOR LICENSES	68
THE CITY SHOULD RAISE MORE REVENUE THROUGH GENERAL TAXATION BY INCREASING REAL ESTATE AND PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES	39
Write In Option: MUNICIPAL LIGHT PLANT	1
Spoiled Ballots	7
TOTAL VOTES CAST	<hr style="width: 100px; margin-left: auto; margin-right: 0;"/> 441

On motion duly adopted, the City Council rescinded the motion of April 1, 1947 granting Off Sale liquor licenses and re-issued them for six weeks from May 1, 1947 to June 15, 1947. The On and Off Sale non-intoxicating malt liquor licenses were granted for a period of one year as the municipal “On and Off Sale” stores did not affect the non-intoxicating 3.2 licenses.

The Minnetonka Bar/Lounge aka “The Blue Room” (1947)

While going municipal liquor was a “Big Step” for Wayzata, their sights were small when it came to selecting the space for the two stores. The Off Sale Store and Bar/lounge would be adjacent to each other and share the same cooler. The former Wayzata Liquor Store next door to Carisch Theater on Lake Street would house the ”On Sale Bar and Lounge”, officially called the “Minnetonka Bar” and the “Minnetonka Room” Both names were soon replaced by local residents who dubbed it “The Blue Room” for the deep blue color on the back wall of the lounge. Larry Leding was appointed manager of the liquor operation and Fred Moritz, George Reynolds and William Peyton were the first bar tenders and off-sale clerks.

The bar appointments carried out the nautical theme of its location on Lake Street “By the Waters of Minnetonka.” Two anchors adorned the back bar on either side of the cash register with an upholstered canopy over the center of the bar which supported a neon “Minnetonka Bar” sign. The 27 foot blond wood bar was finished in front in cream leatherette complete with “splash rail” designed to keep patrons elbows off the damp bar surface. There were eight cream and red leatherette upholstered booths and two tables with chairs for a total seating capacity of thirty-six (36).

The City's sale of their U. S. Government Savings bonds totaling \$21,300.00 and a thirty day temporary bond sale of \$10,000 were appropriated to the "Liquor Fund" for start up funds and to pay for remodeling and furnishings for the two stores.

The "Off Sale Store" opened on September 2nd with a rented cash register and \$200 change in the till and the lounge the following Saturday after refrigeration, sink and drains were installed. The new bar and lounge were particularly attractive to the Veterans back home from the war eager to have a local place to meet old friends over a drink. And where the boys were the girls were sure to follow. Many a new romance blossomed in the Blue Room and the late night wager was over "who was going to be walked home by whom."

For the most part, the Blue Room had few altercations unless you count the incident during the "Days of '49" celebration when Vern Johnson rode his horse from the parade route in the front door of the Blue Room demanding a "drink for himself and one for his horse!" Manager Larry Leding failed to be amused and called for help and Mayor Arnold Vodegel soon appeared, dressed in his "49er outfit" of cowboy hat, boots and a two gun holster and ordered Vern to back his horse out of the bar! From the spectators view, it was excitingly picturesque. The horse refused to back up and had to be led through the entire lounge and out the back door. There is no record of just what happened to Vern but if he was smart he galloped off into the sunset before the excitement of having Bob Hope in town as the Grand Marshall of the "Days of '49" parade wore off and the Mayor had time to reconsider the incident.

A second "Off Sale" store was opened in 1960 at the Colonial Square in the north/south wing of retail stores next to the North Shore Bank (now Anchor Bank) and the Red Owl Store. This store was in operation until 1977. Bob Ice who began working in the Lake Street off-sale store became the manager and clerk of the Colonial Square store.

The "Blue Room" remained in operation at its Lake Street location until June 1, 1967, the night before the new facility opened at the Bay Center. It was bid a final farewell by a group of regular patrons singing "Auld Lang Syne" at midnight. As they left the store they placed a sign in the window shaped like a tombstone flanked by two "dead bodies" (empty whiskey bottles) the date, June 1, 1967 and "R.I.P. (Rest in Peace) Our Blue Room" printed on the face of the tombstone.

The Town Tavern (1967)

By 1966, the City Council began looking for larger facilities. They advertised for possible space to lease or for someone to step forward and offer to build a new location for the municipal liquor operation. There were three locations proposed—(1) Dr. Richard Palmer's land west of the Vet Hospital (Burnet Realty now,) (2) Bert Supplee's lot on the corner of Broadway and Lake Street and (3) at the Bay Center site submitted by Richard Anderson, President of the Bay Center Development for Prince Salm of Germany, owner of the property.

The council selected the Bay Center site and signed a contract for monthly rent of \$4.00 a square foot. The Bay Center Development Company would build the building and the City of Wayzata would pay for the inside design, layout and fixtures.

Mayor Wheelock Whitney advised the Council to consider advertising for bids for someone to manage the complete project for the "On Sale" store. J. F. Palin Company was awarded the contract at a cost of \$29,769.95, adding the Off Sale store costs of shelving and cooler, the total cost was \$45,040.95. The date for opening the new facility was set for June 2, 1967.

The new facility would house two bars, a working man's bar and bar/lounge, plus a large off-sale shop. One long bar carried through from the "working man's bar" to the lounge so bar tenders could work both locations. The "working man's bar" was designed to be a casual "drop in for a beer" type bar. The dark wood paneling gave it the look and feel of an English Pub with a twist. There was one colored TV mounted on the wall and a large Juke Box in the corner with speakers in both bars.

The bar/lounge also had dark wood paneling, with red suede wallpapered panels with a wood "X" design in the center of each panel. A decorative cone-shaped, bronze light fixture hung above each booth. Far from the nautical theme of the "Blue Room" the new "Minnetonka Room" resembled an English Tavern. There was a colored TV in the bar area and music selection boxes at each booth connected to the Juke Box in the workingman's bar.

Naegle Sign Company provided the sign. The description in the council minutes was quite interesting in its attempt to describe the sign. "It would be comprised of six fiber-glass barrels resting in a 3-2-1 arrangement atop a standard and supplying two hanging plaques identifying the services rendered." (April 4, 1967 council minutes) Missing was the name. After receiving several suggestions from around town, the final choice was "Town Tavern" for the combined operation with supplementary plaques to identify the features "Bottle Shoppe" and "Minnetonka Room."

New to the liquor store operation were uniforms for the bar tenders of black pants, white shirts, black ties and burgundy vests with burgundy blazers for the package-store clerks. All uniforms to be provided by the city.

Opening day was June 2, 1967. There were forty people lined up at the door of the "Working Man's Bar" before the 9 A.M. opening and over seventy-five customers were waiting for the bar/lounge to open at noon. It was standing room only throughout the day. They drank the beer coolers dry and re-fills had to be rushed from the Colonial Square Bottle Shop coolers throughout the day. The Minnetonka Room filled with smoke due to a malfunction of the exhaust system. Final analysis of day was the beer coolers were obviously too small and they needed two more waitresses and the exhaust system needed adjusting. Opening day problems were quickly resolved and the new liquor store manager Richard "Butch" Erickson smiled all the way to the bank with the opening day proceeds beyond their expectations.

City Manager Wayne Fadden had advised the council that they would need at least \$80,000.00 in additional revenue to cover the higher cost of rent and other expenses. By the end of 1968, municipal liquor sales exceeded the \$1 million mark with gross sales of \$1,037,608.33.

It should be noted with the new larger "Town Tavern" another new tradition began. After adjourning the City Council meetings, council members gathered for a "Pitcher of Beer" at the new municipal bar. It probably helped put an end to those one and two o'clock in the morning meetings because the bar closed at midnight week nights.

State Laws Allow Private On Sale Liquor Licenses-1974

According to a new state law, the Wayzata City Council was now permitted to issue on-sale liquor licenses to private persons in conjunction with operating a hotel or restaurant without losing the city's right to operate its own on-sale or off-sale outlets. Before issuing such licenses, however, the granting authority must be approved by voters at a special election.

The Chamber of Commerce urged the city to move forward on the issue. The election was set for December 3, 1974. If the referendum passed, Wayzata could issue as many as seven private licenses to restaurant owners with a guarantee of no less than 65% of sales from food and no more than 35% from the sale of liquor. License fees were \$7500 a year with an additional \$200 for serving liquor on Sunday.

The referendum passed with a vote of 672 yes, to 181, no and 9 blank. The vote for Sunday liquor sales was 621 for, 221 against and 20 blank.

The Port O' Call Bistro 1986

Twenty years after opening the Town Tavern in the Bay Center, the council was beginning to think about remodeling but a catastrophic event at the "working man's bar" pushed the decision ahead more quickly. Shortly after the bar opened at 9 A.M. one day, a long time bar regular came in, ordered his drink and after a couple of sips slumped forward on the bar and died. The bar closed for the next several hours with everyone pretty much "done in" by the experience. But for City Manager Al Orson it was a day of reckoning. No longer should the city have a bar with early morning openings and encourage an early start on consuming alcohol. The council concurred. It was time for change. It was time to remodel! Was it a moral decision, perhaps, but it was also a good decision for Wayzata citizens as the new operation moved toward becoming a bar and grill.

Bids were put out in September, 1986 for remodeling the liquor stores at the same location. Total project cost was set at \$300,000.00 The bar closed down for remodeling while the Off-Sale remained open. The walls came down between the two bars and made one large bar and lounge with one circular bar and seating at bistro tables and stools, booths and low tables and chairs. In addition, the windows were installed along the west wall. Part of the "Working man's bar" became the kitchen for preparation of the newly added bar and grill menu of hamburgers, fries, basket foods and homemade soup.

The food menu brought the lunch and dinner crowd. Families began to frequent the bar & grill for the great hamburgers including the popular "Mayor Burger" (Mayor Giswold special) and prime rib on Saturday night.

The "Off Sale" store remained pretty much the same as it was except for a larger cooler and some changes in the shelving. The new look in the bar/lounge was that of a "Sport's Bar." Televisions lined the walls, a peanut barrel stood at the door—peanut shells were just dropped on the floor and pictures of "old time Wayzata" lined the walls giving it a historic, small town charm with a casual atmosphere.

It had a new name—PORT O' CALL BISTRO. The bar/lounge opened with its first lady bartender, Jeanie, and new opening hours of 11 A.M. in the dbar and grill. Liquor Operations Manager was Richard Risacher and Jack Doran and Chester Perry worked both as bar tenders and clerks. The Colonial Square Off Sale Store was closed in 1977 and incorporated with the Bay Center store with Bob Ice in charge of the "Off Sale" operation.

In 1988, another new addition to the bar was the Lion's Club "pull tab" booth.

1994 New Face Lift-New Manager-New Name

In 1994, the bar itself was spruced up, the leatherette splash was replaced by nicely polished wood, new stools and chairs were added and day by day new items were added to the menu, fresh salads and more sandwich choices, wraps were popular and Prime Rib or ribs on the weekend.

The combined name remained the Port O'Call Bistro but the lounge became "The Wayzata Bar & Grill" and the "Off Sale" store was named "Wine and Spirits" but by now it didn't matter what the official name was because everyone just called it "The Muni."

Changes were made in the "Off Sale" store as wine specials replaced Vodka specials and Hard liquor was relocated to the back wall shelves. New shelving for displaying wines took front and center, sorted by country and location of origin.

New Liquor Operations Manager Gina Holman, whisked away from Minnetonka Country Club, came on board. Gina had catering experience and soon the "Muni" was handling all catering for city functions. Item by item, the menu grew. Two Chefs were required to keep up with the lunch and dinner crowd many of whom were regulars with their "own table or booth," AND the "Barrel of Peanuts" was replaced by a "Popcorn Machine" much to the delight of everyone, customers, waitresses and cleanup crews. In December 2009, two flat screen TV's were added to bring the Muni right up to date with the times!

The very latest addition to the operation is that of a "Sommelier." After two years of attending classes at the International Sommelier Guild, Manager Gina has graduated and received her ISG Sommelier certification. Gina can assist customers with pairing "wine and food." Her new achievement is a valuable asset to a liquor store that has high volume wine sales.

Over the sixty-two (62) years the City of Wayzata has been in the municipal liquor business both "On and Off Sale," they have not been shy about making adjustments to keep up with the changes in society particularly as it relates to Wayzata. What began as a "Watering Hole" in 1947 has become "A Gathering Place" in 2009. It may not be in a historic building like the depot or post office but, "the Muni" has found its own place in the history of Wayzata,

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Sources:

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