

November 1, 2021

City of Naperville
Liquor Commission
400 S. Eagle St.
Naperville, IL 60540

RE: Features Bar & Grill, 14 W Chicago Ave., Naperville, IL 60540

Dear Mayor Chirico:

Throughout COVID, local governments have taken extraordinary measures to support local businesses dealing with unprecedented circumstances. Without such support, many local businesses would cease to exist today. We appreciate the support that the City of Naperville has offered to-date and look forward to working with the City as the business community continues to recover.

On behalf of Features Bar & Grill (“Features”), I respectfully request that the City extend the temporary relief enacted this past summer for outdoor seating at restaurants. The program has been a resounding success for both restaurants and the community as a whole. With mask mandates still in place and lingering concerns about COVID, there is ample reason to extend the program as the restaurant industry continues to dig out of the hole created by COVID.

Last fall, in coordination with City staff, the Downtown Naperville Alliance (“DNA”), and the Naperville Development Partnership (“NDP”), Features made a significant investment to turn three storage containers into “train cars” that could be utilized for “outdoor” dining throughout the winter months. While we had some operational difficulties along the way, particularly with respect to staffing, the train cars were undoubtedly a hit. The train cars generated significant media interest, a substantial number of dining reservations, and brought visitors to downtown Naperville during otherwise difficult times.

Features invested approximately \$28,000 to construct the train cars, which include electric, heating, windows, an advanced HVAC system, and components to facilitate efficient service operations. To recoup its initial investment in the train cars, it is critical that Features be permitted to operate the train cars throughout this winter season. Staffing has already been aligned for the train cars this winter, reservation requests are rolling in, and media outlets have inquired about the status of the train cars.

The City's continued support of its restaurants is the last outstanding obstacle for the return of the train cars. While COVID concerns seem to be retreating somewhat, please consider that the restaurant industry has been negatively impacted for almost 2-years now. We respectfully request that the liquor commission recommend extension of the City's special outdoor seating program through this winter and next spring.

Very truly yours,

Russell G. Whitaker

Russell G. Whitaker, III