



## THE EXPRESS-TIMES

### Bar clears license hurdle

**Forks Twp. OKs transfer. Big Woody's Pizza and Sports Bar still must get final approval from LCB.**

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FORKS TWP. | The board of supervisors voted Thursday night to approve the transfer of a liquor license to a proposed Italian restaurant and sports bar.

The decision wasn't easy for some residents to swallow.

The vote to grant the transfer to Big Woody's Pizza and Sports Bar at 1855 Sullivan Trail was 4-1, with Supervisor Dave Howell casting the dissenting vote.

During a public hearing that preceded the supervisors meeting and ran an hour past its allotted time, Howell grilled Big Woody's owners Elwood Marcks Sr., a former NFL player with the Eagles and Jets, and his son Elwood Marcks Jr. about liquor violations their other establishments have been cited for in the past.

The Marcks operate three other Big Woody's restaurants, all in Allentown. Marcks Jr. testified he could recall receiving only three citations for serving alcohol to minors at seven different establishments over the past 20 years, but Howell said he was able to dig up other violations, including gambling citations at two different times in 2002.

Marcks Sr. downplayed the citations.

"These were machines you put on the counter and you could play 10 different games on them," he said. "There were no payouts."

As part of their motion to approve the liquor license transfer, the board asked that the machines be kept out of the Forks Township location. The Big Woody's restaurants in Allentown still have the machines, Marcks Sr. said.

The new Big Woody's will occupy 60,000 square feet in a new shopping center under construction across from the former Laneco. Marcks Jr. said he hopes it will be a popular destination for families.

"A big part of our business is getting involved," he said. "If there's little league games or high school games, we like to attract people to come to the restaurant."

Residents who spoke at the hearing took issue with the restaurant's plan to stay open until 2 a.m. and its proximity to a school.

"I think it's safe to say that families and little leaguers won't be in your bar at 1 a.m. on Tuesday night," Scott Gingold said.

Brian Clark is the owner of The Goddard School, a school for infants through 6-year-olds slated to be built about 420 feet from Big Woody's. State law says places serving alcohol must be at least 300 feet away from schools. Clark says he doesn't know if that's far enough.

"I'm really uneasy about having a bar so close to school," said Clark.

Resident John Castrovinci agreed.

"There will be schoolchildren passing this establishment," he said. "I'm concerned about that."

The proposal will now go to the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board for final approval. Board members encouraged residents unhappy with the decision to express their concerns to the LCB.

Marcks Sr. said he was happy the board voted to move forward with the transfer.

"We wish to do the area proud," he said.

Tamer Ahmed, the Marcks' lawyer, said the new Big Woody's will be tailor-made for Forks Township.

"You're not going to get the same clientele here as you do in Allentown," Ahmed told the board. "It's not a biker bar where you go do shots and then drive home."

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