

Report on meeting held at La Bonbonniere's Cookie Jar bakery on September 24, 2003.

Present:

- Matt D'Agostino, La Bonbonniere's Cookie Jar, 356 Main Street, Woodbridge
- Gail and Richard Morrone, Legally Delicious, 120 Main Street, Woodbridge
- Biren Jhaveri, Pari Beauty Salon, 22 Marconi Ave and Oak Tree Road, Iselin

Members of chamber were present after getting an email asking if there were issues opening their small business. Purpose of meeting was to develop ideas for a portion of the chamber web site to inform new members what procedures should be followed when opening or remodeling a business in Woodbridge township and to point these businesses to the administrative officials that could answer their questions.

Issues discussed:

Information not conveyed to new owners:

Board of health –

- Receptionist was asked what must be done to open a new business. Owner told receptionist that they were opening a new business and asked what was required. They were told a board of health license was required, paid the fee and left.
- After remodeling store owner was told there was a guide from the board of health for food establishments (Chapter 12 of the Board of Health code) that should have been followed. Changes to new construction had to be made after remodeling.
- If the receptionist had been taught (scripted) to hand out or inform a new business that Chapter 12 of the code should be consulted before even beginning construction time and money would have been saved.
- Issues with code:
 - Triple sink with an air gap for drain must be installed
 - Each bin in sink should be labeled with Wash, Rinse and sanitize
 - Sanitizing tester kit must be used
 - All floor and wall joints must be sealed

Zoning –

- To start construction appointment was necessary with Zoning official.
- Could not get appointment for 2 weeks.
- Official cancelled appointment and owner had to wait one more week.

- When finally seeing zoning official was told an architect's plan must be submitted.
- If receptionist had been taught (scripted) owner could have been immediately told (3 weeks before) that an architect's plan would be needed. Rent was being paid the whole time.
- Once all construction was finished and final inspection was done it took 10 days to get a certificate of occupancy. Why the long delay? If all approvals have been made, why can't there be a temporary CO issued until red tape is taken care of. Rent still must be paid even though store is not allowed to open without a CO.

Permits –

- Plans must be submitted in duplicate to Board of Health for any food establishment before the building department will even look at them.
- Any construction that will go on during business in a food establishment requires a second set of plans with phases of construction be submitted to the board of health that will protect food at each phase.
- New construction requires architects plans, electrical and plumbing engineering plans and must be submitted to the building department with duplicate copies for all departments including plumbing, electrical, fire, zoning, etc.
- The board of health has 14 days to approve plans. The building department has up to 30 days to approve plans for building. This means that just to start a project the owner may have to wait six weeks before construction for approvals.
- When speaking to anyone at town hall and permission is given verbally, get it in writing. Many instances of getting a verbal "OK" by official to be later followed by "I never said that".
- If putting up a sign or awning there are many caveats. Among them, sign can be no larger than 10% of building face in square footage.
- If awning or canopy is within a near distance of traffic light, zoning department must approve the color. Also, awning must be made of fire retardant material.
- Changing a hot water heater requires a permit

Suggestions

1. Two businesses invited were never informed by the Chamber of the existence of the Small Business Council. We should have a packet ready for new members with some of the caveats above, official contacts with phone numbers for remodeling or building a new business, members of the chamber who volunteer to give advice about opening a new business with knowledge of existing regulations.
2. The above would be the start of a "members only" section of the chamber web site

3. We should contact new members after they're open and ask what problems they had to overcome that we may add to the above list.
4. There should be an ombudsman for businesses as a liaison with building and zoning officials
5. Chamber members should be made aware of how our group is funded. Question was raised as to whether any of the above information would be "allowed" to be put on the chamber site.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew P. D'Agostino
Member, Steering Committee
Sub-committee Chair for New Business Construction or Remodelling

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