

Woody Creek Tavern patio extension here to stay

The Woody Creek Tavern on Wednesday afternoon. The Pitkin Board of County Commissioners agreed Wednesday that the establishment could continue to serve alcohol in its expanded patio area that was set up during COVID-19.

Anna Stonehouse/Aspen Daily News

Additional patio space served the Woody Creek Tavern well amid the pandemic and its new owners intend to keep the extra space intact even as COVID-19 restrictions dissipate.

In May 2020, the state's Liquor and Tobacco Enforcement Division allowed restaurants like the Woody Creek Tavern to apply for boundary extensions where customers could consume alcohol. The legislation, which was intended to be temporary, helped establishments that served alcohol accommodate more guests while still adhering to public health orders intended to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Last June, Woody Creek Tavern's then owner Kevin Wilson applied for a temporary boundary extension to the restaurant's patio area, which the Pitkin Board of County Commissioners approved. The modification also included a protective metal barrier between the tavern's additional waiting area and Upper River Road.

Aspen restaurateurs Craig and Samantha Cordts-Pearce — who are also behind The 

Wild Fig, two downtown steakhouses and CP Burger — purchased the Woody Creek Tavern at the end of 2020.

At Wednesday's BOCC meeting, the new owners requested that the additional patio space and waiting area become permanent fixtures to the venerable bar and grill.

The property located along Upper River Road once housed a grocery store, post office and gas station, according to the Woody Creek Tavern's website.

“The additional patio is right in front of that post office area. ... It is all part of the Woody Creek property that we purchased,” Samantha Cordts-Pearce said during the BOCC meeting.

People wait in that area, she said, “with cocktails or without and we’re trying to make it into ... an area that is professionally operated where we can contain guests from ... spilling out into the street and be able to serve in that area to make it, particularly in the summertime, just a lot more functional.”

The Woody Creek Tavern’s application to permanently extend its liquor license boundary was originally on the consent agenda portion of Wednesday’s meeting.

However, Commissioner Steve Child requested that the agenda item be discussed individually due to questions over exactly where alcohol could be consumed on the property.

“Everything then that you own there will be on the premises for serving alcohol ... Am I understanding that correct then?” Child asked. To which Cordts-Pearce — who could not be reached for further comment by the Daily News’ press time Wednesday — replied, yes.

“It’s all one space. So, it just makes sense that it’s all ... licensed appropriately,”

Cordts-Pearce said.

Ultimately, commissioners were supportive of the Woody Creek Tavern's liquor license boundary extension but asked staff to determine whether or not any additional land-use approvals may also be necessary.

"I'm supportive of this," Commissioner Patti Clapper said. "I think it's better to have a place for people to go than to worry about them being ... on the roadway when you get busy. I think having the additional space is perfect."

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