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Wine and a Movie? Maybe Not

By Sophie Braccini



To sip a glass of Chardonnay on a leather sofa while watching a movie on the big screen is one idea of entertainment that the operators of The New Rheem Theatre want to bring to Moraga. After installing the sofas, the California Independent Film Festival Association (CAIFFA) applied for an alcohol license from the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) last July. Not long after that the ABC indicated that 'an area resident' filed a protest and the matter will have to be settled through a public hearing.

"I contacted Beverage Control and the person who filed the protest is Emily Justice," said Chief of Moraga Police Bob Priebe, "The over-concentration issue was the reason given for the protest. I was not told how many licenses are active in the Rheem Center, but at one license per 2500 (people), that means only six are recommended for the entire town."

There are already 11 active licenses in Moraga, including restaurants and stores that sell alcohol.

The Haunting of the New Rheem Theatre

Development, a non-profit funded in part by Contra Costa Health Services. At the time she left that position, Justice was the supervisor of Jaime Rich, the Center's Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coordinator.

Emily Justice was, at the time she filed the protest, the Director of Youth Development and Training at the Center for Human

In August, the Alcohol & Other Drugs Advisory Board to the Contra Costa Health Services wrote a concerned letter to ABC indicating that it was not opposed to the sale of alcohol but wanted to make sure that no minors would be able to gain access to it.

"We thought it would be acceptable as long as the 21 and over crowd had access to alcohol in a separate area," said Moraga resident and Advisory Board member Jim Doyle, "we were concerned that the theater is a family venue." Doyle also indicated that every time he went to events organized at either the Rheem or the Orinda Theatre (which is also managed by CAIFFA) he was pleased with the way things were handled and he was aware that Moraga needs more businesses, not less. "It is important for the community to weigh in," he said.

CAIFFA's Leonard Pirkle has been quite concerned with the whole process. "We have increasing demands from the studios that are requiring that we buy all digital equipment for our theaters, and we won't be able to make that important investment (in the \$200,000 range) if we do not increase our concession sales," he said, "ABC would like us to have one of our theaters dedicated to viewers 21 and older, which could be hard to manage. I don't know if we have a solution, but we are trying to come up with a plan."

The date of the hearing has not yet been set. John Carr, ABC Public Information Officer, indicated that ABC encourages applicants and protesters to sit down and discuss solutions before heading to a hearing.

Jaime Rich, who does not want to be a hindrance to local business, indicated that she would like to discuss the situation with CAIFFA. "If I could sit down with them and come up with a reasonable solution, there's a possibility that the protest could be dropped," she said, although she was not sure if she had the authority to do so or if she'd have to refer back to Contra Costa Health Services.

Residents who wish to express their support or opposition to the project can call ABC at (510) 622-4970 or send an email either to ABC at OAKDirect@abc.ca.gov or to Jaime Rich at Jaime@chd-prevention.org.

The Haunting of the New Rheem Theatre

The California Independent Film Festival Association recently announced the return of the Dark Dreams Haunted House to the large theater the last two weekends in October. The construction started in late September. "These are all professional sets," explains Joanne Foy, "we are creating 2000 square feet full of nightmares!"

Foy warns younger residents that this is a scary haunt. "Children 10 to 99 years old can come on their own," she says, "but younger ones could be scared by the monster and should only wander in under their parents' supervision."

On Halloween day, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., the "house" will be free of monsters so that little ones can go without risking too big a

scare.

"It's old fashion fun for the whole family, children, teens and adults alike, and completely safe," adds Foy, who's been doing this for years and admits that she absolutely loves it because it reminds her of her childhood.

Senior Solutions, Foy's company, is the corporate sponsor of the event. "This is an annual fundraiser for the theater," adds Foy, "all of the workers and participating monsters are volunteers."

The haunting will take place on October 21, 23, and 28-31 from 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. and 'til midnight on Halloween.

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