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Home-brew retailer wants to sell liquor, seeks council's OK

By Kathy Steele

Approval of a home-brew retail store and beer garden by the Tampa City Council was delayed after the store's owners said they wanted to revisit an earlier request to sell liquor as well as beer and wine.

The owners of Southern Brewing & Winemaking, Brian and Kelly Fenstermacher, want to relocate their retail store from Busch Boulevard to 4500 Nebraska Ave., across from Mega SuperMarket. They sell supplies to make beer and wine at home and also offer home-brewing classes on site.

The Fenstermachers would add a beer garden, bocce courts and shuffleboard at the new location.

"They are putting in easily their life savings in this business," said attorney Mark Bentley, who represents the couple.

The city council recently gave initial approval to the sale of beer and wine on site as well as package sales for take away. But the council excluded liquor sales after a lengthy public hearing and objections from some area residents opposed to granting any alcohol permit.

None of those residents was present at the second hearing to renew their objections.

"I'm not comfortable with that," said Councilman Mike Suarez, who said the owners' change of mind seemed like "a second bite of the apple."

Bentley said some of the couple's business will come from corporate parties, birthdays and other events at Southern Brewing. There is no intent to operate as a bar, he added.

In a 4-3 vote, the council agreed to amend the permit request to include on-site liquor sales until 11 p.m. Suarez, Mary Mulhern and Harry Cohen voted no.

A public hearing on the revision was scheduled for Aug. 18.

Bentley said his clients would pay to send a notification to neighbors about the hearing.