

Germania Band Club in Manheim gets approval to turn deck into café

By ROCHELLE A. SHENK, Correspondent Published: Aug 15, 2007 12:47 AM EST
From the Lancaster, PA, *Intelligencer-Journal*.

LANCASTER COUNTY, Pa. - The Germania Band Club received approval Aug. 6 from Manheim Borough zoning hearing board to convert an existing deck at its clubhouse, 41 S. Pitt St., into an outdoor café. In granting the request, the board stated the deck must be closed at 9 p.m. after a board member and two property owners expressed concern about noise.

Ron Smith, president of the club, said the 40-by-15-foot deck was constructed a few years ago on the south side of the property above an existing swale. The deck was built a few inches above ground level to allow water to flow into the swale.

Smith said the deck could accommodate as many as 25 chairs. It has a grill, three tables and 12 chairs.

The deck is accessible only from the lower level of the club. Because the lower area is rented for private parties, Smith said an entrance door would be added to provide access from the main level of the club. He said an emergency exit with a panic bar would be added to the deck.

“We do allow smoking in the club, and right now people use the deck to get some fresh air. We use the grill on a limited basis. We host a golf outing and would like to be able to come back from that and do some grilling rather than have something at the golf club. That would cut our costs,” he said.

Smith said there would not be a bar located on the deck, and when it’s open it will be supervised by a club officer.

He said the club needed zoning approval from the borough to pursue changes to its permit from the state Liquor Control Board.

Increasing the outdoor activities at the club sparked some concerns from a board member and neighbors about noise. Elaine Gantz, zoning hearing board chair, said, “I think about the noise level and how it could affect neighbors.”

Marlene Locker, the owner of a rental property at 60 S. Charlotte St., said the noise from patrons may carry over to her tenants. “I don’t get any complaints from my tenants now, but I do have a concern with this use,” she said.

Smith said in the last two months the bartenders at the club have become certified with the TIPS (Training for Intervention ProcedureS) program, which provides training and education for the responsible service, sale and consumption of alcohol.

James Weaver, the owner of rental properties at 54 to 56½ S. Charlotte St., raised concerns about the impact of noise on his tenants and questioned if additional lights will be installed on the deck.

Weaver said, “There may be some noise as people go to their cars, but that’s short lived.”

Smith said the club does not have plans to install additional permanent lighting on the deck, but the club may install a string of decorative lights on the six-foot fence by the deck.

Rob Stoner, borough manager and zoning officer, said police Chief Barry Weidman did not report noise problems at the club.

According to a Manheim Historical Society publication, the Germania Band Club is an offshoot of Manheim’s Germania Band, which was organized in 1903 and disbanded in 1942. The club has been licensed since 1934.