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Restaurants attempt to get new bistro licenses

By Jeremy Carroll
C & G Staff Writer

ROYAL OAK — Café Muse, which moved from a tiny location on Washington Avenue to a bigger one on the same street at the end of 2008, is hoping to expand again. But this time it's with the menu — by adding beer and wine.

The restaurant, located at 418 S. Washington, is one of three businesses to apply for the newly designed liquor license, called a bistro license. Earlier this summer, the City Commission passed the ordinance allowing small-scale restaurants to apply for the license.

"One of the main reasons is we want to be able to serve dinner," said chef Greg Reyner. "But it's obviously a little cost prohibitive for a small restaurant to buy a liquor license."

Regular liquor licenses, known as Class C licenses, can cost upwards of six figures in Royal Oak, but the bistro license comes from the state at a fixed cost of \$20,000.

"We just want to serve beer and wine," Reyner said. "We think it would enhance the dining experience."

He said they are hopeful that they will be successful in obtaining a license.

"Obviously when you are dealing with a new process like this, it's going to take a little time," he said.

Along with Café Muse, What Crepe?, 317 S. Washington, and Cloverleaf Fine Wine, 711 S. Main, have applied for a bistro license, said City Attorney Dave Gillam.

Paul Jenkins Jr., owner of What Crepe?, said he would like to serve wine with the crepes they sell for lunch and dinner.

"There is a whole romanticism with the place without the wine, it would just add to it," he said.

Under the ordinance passed in July, to be eligible for a license, the restaurant would have to have a maximum of 75 seats inside, be open no later than midnight and have no dancing or gaming devices indoors.

In addition to the local requirements, the applicant must meet the standards of a development license from the state, Gillam said. Among those regulations are that the applicant must have spent at least \$75,000 on the redevelopment of their building. He said there is a minimum number of 50 seats allowed, as well.

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