

Wine Bar Planned for Downtown Cass City

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CASS CITY Village leaders here hope to help pop the cork on a new wine bar planned in downtown Cass City.

Village council members on Monday night voted to submit an application seeking a \$25,000 grant for The Oak Room CC L.L.C., a proposed wine bar owned by Kellen Mooney at 6473 Main St.

The grant, if received, would come from the Match on Main program provided by the Michigan Economic Development Corp.

The MEDC seeks a grant applicant who "focuses on supporting place-based businesses as they launch and grow on Main Street," according to the MEDC website.

Another of the program's goals is to "activate vacant or underutilized space" in a downtown area.

Mooney aims to open the wine bar in the building immediately east of his Market on Main business, which opened in November of 2024, seeking to offer unique items created or discovered by local vendors.

The Oak Room CC L.L.C., once open, also would be an "entertainment venue," said Cass City village Manager Debbie Powell.

"(Mooney) was looking at being open on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, but the space could be rented out for gatherings such as a baby shower, or an event, or for a meeting space or a class," Powell said.

The wine bar and event space would occupy the front portion of the building, with the back part designated for housing, according to Powell.

Mooney is "looking at adding a studio apartment in the back of the building," Powell said.

The grant money, if received by The Oak Room CC L.L.C., will help pay for interior renovations including plumbing, drywall, electrical work and equipment

purchases. The Oak Room CC L.L.C. commits to providing \$2,500, on top of the \$25,000 grant, as a required 10 percent match for the grant.

Cass City has applied for the past two years for the Match on Main grant, without success. Powell said Melanie Radabaugh, the village's director of community development, parks and recreation, contacted several local businesses about submitting applications for the Match on Main grant. But the village applied for the grant on behalf of only one business, The Oak Room CC L.L.C.

"It was the best application, so we're asking to be able to submit it," Powell told council members at Monday's meeting.

"We had a team go over the applications," noted Powell. "We had the Michigan Small Business Development Center look at it, also, because they have set criteria for what they're trying to meet.

"When you write a grant application, you want to make sure you're meeting those criteria, so you have a better chance, especially when we haven't gotten anywhere in the last two rounds of applications."

The village council on Monday night also voted to spend \$48,791 to buy a 2025 Ford Police Interceptor Utility all-wheel drive vehicle from Lunghammer Ford of Owosso.

The 2025 vehicle replaces a 2020 Ford Police Interceptor Utility vehicle that has had numerous mechanical issues, according to a recommendation from Powell and Cass City Police Chief James Freeman.

The statement from Powell and the police chief determined "this vehicle is not safe to operate when an emergency response is required."

The council on Monday also approved an increase in the number of paid sick time hours – for permanent part-time employees – from 40 hours per year to 60 hours per year. The increase is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2025.

Such permanent part-time employees include a janitor, an administrative assistant, and a number of part-time police officers. There will be no pay-outs to such employees for unused sick time, though those workers may carry over unused paid time off from year to year, for a maximum of 80 hours on the books

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