



# Coca-Cola bottling plant to get new life?

## The public notice from 8/3/23

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS**

The City of Staunton Planning Commission will hold the following Public Hearing at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 17, 2023. The hearings will be held in Rita S. Wilson Council Chambers located on the first floor of City Hall, 116 W Beverley Street.

- Public Hearing and Consideration of a Request by David Wilson to Rezone 537 Calvert Street from B-2, General Business District, to R-2, Low Density Residential District. The Property is Identified on the City Real Estate Records as Parcel Identification Number 1015. The City of Staunton Comprehensive Plan 2018 – 2040, Land Use Development Guide, Designates the Area as Medium Density Residential with a Maximum Density of 1 to 5 Units Per Acre.

- Public Hearing and Consideration of a Request by John Schoeb, 709 N Augusta St, LLC, to Rezone 709 N Augusta Street from B-1, Local Business District, to B-2, General Business District. The Property is Identified on the City Real Estate Records as Parcel Identification Number 7586. The City of Staunton Comprehensive Plan 2018 – 2040, Land Use Development Guide, Designates the Area as Commercial.

## The coverage

### *THE AGENDA*



**Jeff Schwaner**

Published 9:56 p.m. ET Aug. 14, 2023

John Schoeb, a businessman from Crozet, will be requesting a rezoning of the old Coke plant at 709 N. Augusta St., to open a brewery and tasting room. He also has long-term plans for bringing a restaurant to the premises.

The first step is to secure the rezoning necessary to do the brewing and bottling on-premises. Staff's review mentioned that down the line, when a restaurant would be brought into the building, parking would become a concern, with on-site parking not available at the property.

Even given that concern, Staff wrote that the plan to rezone would "serve the interests of public necessity, convenience, general welfare, and good zoning practice" and the Staff recommendation is that the Commission recommend approval of the rezoning.

Schoeb co-owns Pro Re Nata Brewery in Crozet.

Agenda for the full meeting is [here](#).

**The Planning Commission meeting will be held in person.** The public will be able to watch on Zoom, and will be able to listen to the audio feed online at <https://www.ci.staunton.va.us/departments/planning-zoning-division> or on the public access television station (Comcast channel 7). Those members of the public wishing to participate will be able to do so in person or via Zoom using the link provided on the City's website. The appropriate page of the website can be accessed using the link above.

## Rezoning for Coca-Cola plant tabled after residents raise concerns



**Patrick Hite**

Published 10:50 p.m. ET Aug. 17, 2023

STAUNTON — John Schoeb didn't make a good first impression on the Staunton Planning Commission Thursday night as the Albemarle County businessman hoped to convince the board to rezone property at 709 N. Augusta St. for a brewery and tasting room.

Schoeb, a Charlottesville dentist and co-owner of Pro Re Nata Brewery in Crozet, has requested rezoning of the former Coca-Cola Bottling Works plant from local business to general business, saying he plans to use the building for production of beer and a tasting room. The Coca-Cola plant moved from North Augusta Street to Augusta County in the early 1970s.

At Thursday night's planning commission meeting, which began at 5:30 p.m., Schoeb wasn't present for the public hearing on his own request.



"I am very disappointed that the applicant did not show up today so he could answer some of the questions," said Chair Judith Wiegand, who then moved to table the matter until the next meeting Sept. 21. The motion passed unanimously, although Vice Chair Jessica Robinson had recused herself from the discussion.

About a half hour later after the public hearing was closed, Schoeb showed up. He thought the meeting began at 7 p.m.

"I thought I was the cat's meow showing up at 6:30," Schoeb told The News Leader Thursday night by phone. He apologized to the planning commission members and the public at City Hall during the matters from the public portion of the meeting. He said he'd be back to address concerns about his brewery at the next meeting.

The biggest concerns were parking, traffic and pollution. While staff recommended approval of the rezoning request, they did have concerns about



on-site parking, which is not available at the property. Of the nine people to speak, eight were opposed to the brewery.

"Do not let this go through," Barbara Lee said. "That is one of the most dangerous corners in the city. You have that traffic coming off New Street. You're going to have traffic sitting on the corner. The fire department ... this is not a good idea."

Preston Carter, who lives on Sunnyside Street behind the old Coca-Cola plant, said he was concerned about both parking and the environmental impact.

"What's going to happen to the young children playing in the streets?" he asked. "What's going to happen to the whole neighborhood?"

Even city staff had concerns about parking, writing in its report that it didn't appear that Schoeb had any "definitive plan for providing parking. Staff acknowledges that the use of the property as proposed has the potential to create more traffic in the area."

A lot of the concerns seemed to focus on a possible restaurant, which Schoeb had mentioned in an email to City Planner Timothy Hartless in June. The current zoning actually allows for a restaurant, what it doesn't allow is for brewing beer, thus the reason for the request.



In a conversation with The News Leader after the meeting, Schoeb said that restaurant, if it happens, is years away. What he really wants is to brew beer for both his Crozet business and for a new venue coming to Staunton, The Steam Plant.

Schoeb is working with Chip Clarke, who purchased property located near the corner of Richmond Avenue and Greenville Avenue in 2017. What used to be the steam plant that powered Western State Hospital and the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind will possibly see new life as The Steam Plant at 420 Richmond Avenue.

Clarke told The News Leader Thursday that some legal issues with the railroad held up his plans, and those issues are still unresolved although he's moving ahead. He obtained an Industrial Revitalization Fund grant that allowed him to finish all engineering on the project, allowing construction to begin on the building and possibly rehab the trestle and turn it into a walkway.

"We'll have food provided in a temporary trailer off the rear of the building," Clarke said of his plans for The Steam Plant. "Eventually we'll put a restaurant on the property. But it will be a music event space."

Clarke said he hopes to break ground on The Steam Plant this year and then it should take between 18 and 24 months to complete.

So, at least for now, Schoeb wants to just brew beer at the North Augusta Street location with the main event room being the Steam Room on Richmond Avenue.

"We're not coming in and creating this monstrosity at this point," Schoeb said. "We just want to manufacture beer. That takes three employees to do what I need to do."

Schoeb said he expects anyone who uses the tasting room to walk, parking in the free spots along North Augusta between West Frederick Street and Prospect Street.

As for pollution, he said residents nearby may smell bread but that is all, saying he plans a very green brewery.

In a 2020 study published in the Journal of Cleaner Production, there does appear to be some concern about environmental impact from a brewery.

"In spite of significant technological improvements over the last 20 years, energy consumption, water consumption, wastewater, solid waste and by-products and emissions to air remain major environmental challenges in the brewing industry," the study said.

Renee Clark lives on Sunnyside Street and was the only person to speak in favor of the business.

"The building has been vacant for as long as I can remember," she said. "And it's been used for storage and it's been disarray and disrepair. It really takes away from the neighborhood."

She acknowledged that some of the concerns from other residents should be considered, especially parking. Clark mentioned that the Staunton Public Library has parking directly across the street and isn't used much at night, suggesting that could be a solution.

She also said outreach to the community by Schoeb might help. He did tell The News Leader that after Thursday's meeting, he talked with some residents about their concerns. He said they were positive, but he understands he won't change minds overnight.

Planning commission member Joseph Mills said he was torn on the topic.

"One is I'd like to see the the Coke building resurrected and put into a prosperous business," Mills said. "But I also am very sympathetic listening to those of you who are neighbors of that area and the impact that it would have on your residential areas."

Adam Campbell, also a member of the planning commission, said he wants to find out more about the plans.

"I think there is an opportunity for this to be a success," he said. "But I don't have anywhere near enough information to make a decision at this time."

## **THE AGENDA: How do you find out about rezoning requests and public hearings?**

**Jeff Schwaner Patrick Hite**

Staunton News Leader

Published 12:2 p.m. ET Aug. 29, 2023



STAUNTON — During a Staunton Planning Commission meeting Aug. 17 where the board considered a rezoning request for the former Coca-Cola

Bottling Works plant on North Augusta Street, several members of the community who spoke said they didn't know anything about the plan to rezone until a day or two before the meeting.

One speaker told the planning commission she had no notification despite having just one vacant lot between her and the plant.

"Had it not been for my neighbors, I would not have known what was going on," she said.

Another speaker, who lives on North Augusta Street about two blocks away from the property, said she also received no notification and only found out by talking to a neighbor.

Rodney Rhodes, a senior planner with the City of Staunton, said after the meeting that, "There is no requirement to notify people beyond the adjoining properties."

This isn't the first time a member of the public has said they didn't know about a public hearing in Staunton or didn't find out until late in the game.

The News Leader reached out to Rhodes and asked how the notification process works and where people can find information on these requests.

"Basically, on these type of matters, a written notice is mailed to all adjoining property owners and the advertisement for the public hearing is advertised for two consecutive weeks in the local paper," Rhodes said. That paper is, for the record, The News Leader.

Rezoning requests and special use permits require two public hearings — one before the planning commission and one before city council, Rhodes said.

The written notice goes out for both public hearings and, the Friday before the meeting, the agenda packet is posted online at the city's website. For the planning commission, as well as other boards and commissions, there is a



page that includes agendas and minutes. There's also a page for city council agendas and minutes.

If a matter goes before the board of zoning appeals, the city follows the same public notification process for one public hearing.

"In Staunton, the (board of zoning appeals) has basically two functions — to hear and act on variance applications (deviations from the provisions) from the zoning ordinance, and appeals of the Zoning Administrator's decision," Rhodes said.

That board meets at 4:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month as needed at Staunton City Hall. Meanwhile, the planning commission meets 5:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month at City Hall. Staunton City Council regularly meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. with a work session typically held at 5 p.m before each meeting.

It's the week before Labor Day, and many meetings are either not scheduled for this week or cancelled.

## Coke plant back on Planning Commission menu: THE AGENDA

### ***THE AGENDA***

**Jeff Schwaner Patrick Hite**

Published 10:22 p.m. ET Sept. 18, 2023



STAUNTON — Coke plant, take two. Last month, the Staunton Planning Commission scheduled a public hearing for the request to rezone the former Coca-Cola Bottling Works plant from local business to general business.

The request came from Albemarle County business owner John Schoeb, who plans to use the building at 709 N. Augusta St. for production of a beer and tasting room. The Coca-Cola plant moved from that location to Augusta County in the early 1970s.

Schoeb, however, got the time of the meeting wrong and showed up late. The public hearing happened, with several residents of nearby neighborhoods expressing concerns about parking and the environmental impact. With the applicant not present, the planning commission voted to table the request to this month's meeting, scheduled for Thursday, Sep. 21, at 5:30 p.m.. It's a safe bet Schoeb has entered that time in his calendar.

This past Saturday, Schoeb opened the building for public tours. In the two hours he made it available, Schoeb said nearly 200 people visited, including city officials and Staunton residents. He said it was a huge success, telling The News Leader most of the comments he heard were in support.

"Not to say concerns about parking did not come up," said Schoeb, who co-owns Pro Re Nata Brewery in Crozet. "I addressed the issue head on and feel that many of those that came Saturday will be at the meeting on Thursday. None of the neighbors that expressed concerns at the last meeting at City Hall attended the meet and greet. We put out 250 flyers to the neighborhood and knocked on doors hoping they would attend."

The reason for the rezoning request is to allow for brewing of beer. The current zoning allows for a restaurant; what it doesn't allow is for production. Schoeb has insisted that he doesn't plan for a restaurant now or in the near future. He may not have one at that location at all.

His plan is to brew beer at the North Augusta Street facility and transport it to his Crozet business and to a new venue possibly coming to Staunton, The Steam Plant, located at 420 Richmond Ave. near the intersection with Greenville Avenue. Chip Clarke purchased that property in 2017 and plans to

create a music event space, which he hopes to break ground on this year, he told The News Leader in August.

If the old Coke plant is simply a brewery, Schoeb said he will only need two to four employees, so parking won't be an issue. With the tasting room, or if a restaurant ever does open in the location, more parking will be needed.

"We have conversations going with two neighbors who have relatively large parcels that we could purchase and turn into our parking too," Schoeb said in a video from Saturday's tour posted on YouTube by Darlene Schneck.

In that same video, Schoeb can be heard telling those touring that there is a possibility that the second floor of the building might be used as an Airbnb, a service that allows property owners to list properties for short-term rentals, usually to those vacationing in the area.

Schoeb confirmed that was the case to The News Leader, saying it is allowed under the current and proposed zoning. He would need to add sprinklers and get the proper permits to operate as an Airbnb.

## **Planning Commission unanimously recommends approval of Coke plant rezoning for beer, tap room**



**Jeff Schwaner**

Published 8:20 p.m. ET Sept. 21, 2023

In a unanimous vote after a second public hearing, Staunton's Planning Commission recommended approval of the rezoning request that would enable a brewing operation and tap room at the old Coca-Cola factory at 709 N. Augusta Street.

The request now goes before City Council in October. Council has planned meetings on Oct. 12 and Oct. 26, and a public hearing will be advertised in the weeks leading up to the meeting.

The News Leader will have the complete report on Thursday's public hearing, including public comments for and against the rezoning request, coming Friday.

## Plans for beer brewing and taproom in old Coke plant clears a significant hurdle



**Jeff Schwaner**

Published 9:47 p.m. ET Sept. 25, 2023



Over the weekend, as rain poured down on Queen City Mischief and Magic revelers, a glimpse inside the old Coca-Cola plant on N. Augusta Street a few blocks away would have revealed something that could also be mistaken for magic.

It was raining inside the building, too.

That speaks to the current state of the massive structure that has lain

dormant for decades.

Last week the Staunton City Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the Special Use Permit that will enable beer to be brewed on-site in the old Coca Cola building. And this time, property owner John Schoeb was at the meeting. He arrived an hour late to the previous Planning Commission meeting; the commission tabled making a decision until the September meeting.

Schoeb spoke of his plans and responded to specific questions from the commission and from members of the public in a lively session of the Planning Commission last week.



Rodney Rhodes, Staunton's Senior Planner, re-introduced John Schoeb's request to rezone 709 N. Augusta Street from B1 Local Business District to B2 General Business District, Conditional, to facilitate a "15-20 barrel micro brewery and tasting room," Rhodes said. A restaurant is not in immediate plans. Eating and drinking establishments already could be established without an additional permit, Rhodes said. And brewing of beer could be approved as accessory to a restaurant.

With rezoning the restaurant would not need to be first established. Schoeb wants to start with brewing and a tasting room, so that's why the rezoning request was made.

The 100-year-old-building with its two additions encompasses nearly 26,000 square feet. The building footprint stretches from front to back and nearly side to side across the property, said Rhodes, in summarizing the proposal.



The new business would be "similar to a couple of establishments in the wharf district," Rhodes said.

## **Decade-old exemption has already cleared a path for restaurant without requiring on-site parking spaces**

Earlier exemptions made to motivate investors to repurpose older buildings included the Coke building. Those exemptions date back to 2009, according to Rhodes, and were made to accommodate building footprints that did not allow for on-site parking to be required. "All potential uses of this property are exempt from providing offstreet parking," he said.

Still, many residents of the neighborhood around the old building had parking concerns, including the additional concerns of inebriated drivers in a residential neighborhood.

Zach Lewis, speaking during the public comment portion of the hearing, said, "I think it's a good idea. The only problem I have is a tasting room. That's a sophisticated name for a bar." He was concerned that intoxicated customers leaving parking spaces on the residential streets could "hit some kids in the neighborhood."

Schoeb said in response, "I am absolutely concerned with" parking. He said he was talking to owners of two properties about purchasing the properties or leasing parking spaces from them.

Planning commission member Adam Campbell mentioned that the city could find ways to protect residential parking in the neighborhood. "This is a tremendous opportunity for the city. I see a path forward," he said, before adding that he wants to see a commitment to that vision in the actual zoning package. He also mentioned potential changes to the peculiar nature of the intersection as it currently is, with both Sunnyside and New Streets emptying onto N. Augusta on different sides of the stoplight at Churchville Avenue.

"I do see ways that could be made more efficient as an intersection," Campbell said.

## **Other features of the proposal**

There would be no on-street loading or unloading, Schoeb said. A small box truck would park in the alley alongside the southern side of the building.

"Our employees will be parking in the building, if that's allowed," said Schoeb.

Also, when the tasting room opens, customers will use one of the side alleys for the main entrance. "That's a much safer proposal."

"Everything we're using in the brewing process is all natural," Schoeb said. It's what he called "a farm brewery. We conserve as much water as we can. All of our grains are put into totes to give to farmers instead of being dumped down the drain.

"We're not going through the volume of water that other breweries are," he said, far below the national average.

Are there noxious fumes like there were with the Coke factory? "We have a natural gas boiler that heats water. The only thing sent outside the building is the exhaust and the steam from that."

## **Public vents about pollution, traffic, lost history**

Members of the public spoke both for and against the rezoning, often touching on the advantage of making use of a historic building and the disadvantage of the dangers of increased traffic and the potential destruction of another historically Black neighborhood.

Constance Birch said traffic around the building would increase because "Most people are not prepared to walk so far" from the main streets downtown.

Karen Lynn Johnston, who gives walking tours of the area, spoke in favor of the rezoning. "For me, it is sad to see that building just sitting there." She said she gives walking tours and people always ask about the Coke building.

Caroline Book, who moved here in 2005, said she was lured by "the vibrancy of the community. There was life downtown," she said. The realtor says that her clients "all notice the Coke building, particularly the mosaic in the front.

"The space lends itself perfectly to the task at hand," she said.

Cassie Ivy said she comes from a tourism background and that tourists "They're looking for walkable cities" and have a "strong interest in accessibility."

Cleveland Morris spoke in support of the project. "I worked for 17 years part time at the Staunton Public Library," he said, noting that people like to use the library as a spot for orientation. "I can't tell you how many people look across the street and see it as a black mark for the city of Staunton. They see an extraordinary iconic building and they see it decaying.

Morris said that many people mention the mosaic art on the building's front. He said that Carter Green, who worked on the renovation of the old News Leader building into The Innovation Hub, had great ideas for the space, including a wall illustrating the neighborhood's history. He mentioned that the massive open space of the building might be a limitation to it fitting someone else's business plan. "I can't imagine anybody else who's going to want that—unless they're putting in a roller rink," he said.

Christie Craig who spoke at the last meeting, wanted reassurance that this wasn't just another instance of people with deep pockets rolling over the concerns of those with deep roots in the community. "I want to know that my city protects all of its citizens, not just the ones with the big bank accounts. I want to know that they protect the neighborhoods. I want to know they protect their environments. I want to know they're not going to throw the Black

neighborhoods under the bus... I want to know that this doesn't constitute spot-zoning, which is illegal in this area.

"I want to know that thinly veiled corporations are not bilking money from the tax revenue, based on historic tax credits," she said.

Clinton Davis, whose great grandfather's house on Sunnyside Street dates back to 1885, said, "I ain't heard nothing about the neighborhood," which he says predates the invention of Coca-Cola. "You better be reading your history before you start investing in the neighborhood. We live here, we never had a whole lot." He said the neighborhood's original residents "out there in Fairview Cemetery would be rolling in their graves" about another business taking the Coca-Cola factory's space.



"That beer ain't doing a bit of good to me," he finished. "I think you all lost it on the Black history."

Renee Clark lived in the Sunnyside neighborhood over 25 years and spoke in support of the project. She said that on the Saturday morning that Schoeb gave an open house tour of the building that there were over 200

people who came over those hours. "There were no parking issues whatsoever. There's parking in front of Hersey Tire, there's parking at the public library."

Preston Carter said he's been living in Sunnyside for close to 80 years. "I seen smoke billow out of the pipes into the neighborhood, causing sickness in the neighborhood," he said of the Coca-Cola factory. Of the new business, he said,

"Let it be environmentally good." He mentioned buried oil tanks left at the edge of his property that Coke left behind. "Will you have these tanks pulled out or what?" he asked Schoeb.

"Staunton has overlooked Sunnyside and Baptist for a long time," Carter said. About Schoeb, he said, "He's gonna do his part to keep the area clean, too. It may be a good thing, but then at the same time, it's gonna present a problem for parking." He remembered some of his own reckless scooter rides zooming off Baptist St onto Sunnyside and worried about today's kids on bikes doing the same thing in a neighborhood that suddenly has more traffic.

Ted Rabisoe wanted to make sure the drainage concerns are addressed, but otherwise was in favor of the project. "My son is a brewer and I can confirm the size of the staff you need to brew beer is incredibly small."

JoAnn Tigert spoke at the first public hearing, and again on this night, about water quality concerns in the neighborhood. "I've wanted that building to be used for something," she said. "I hope if there are issues in our neighborhood because of this project, that we have some way to have that dealt with."

Rachel Watts said, "My grandmother and aunt have lived in Sunnyside since I was born. I can attest to that you can produce beer with a small amount of people." She was in favor of the rezoning and the business. "I do think it will be great," she said. She mentioned that there is a lot of diagonal parking just down the street on N. Augusta Street. "If you walk down the street at night, most of the spots are empty anyways."

One resident in favor of the change spoke of seeing a tree growing out of the roof of the old Coke building.

That may be where all that rain was coming in.



## **The applicant responds**

Schoeb then responded to some of the specific questions raised by the public. About the tanks that the Coca-Cola company left buried near Preston Carter's property line, he said, "Those diesel tanks were remediated, drained, scrubbed, neutralized, filled with foam, filled with concrete. We're going to remediate the entire building for asbestos."

He confirmed that part of the design of the building will celebrate the neighborhood. "We are creating the wall of the history of the area. I'm a history major. History matters."

"We want to create a wall where you can walk by the two outside windows and look in and see the history of that community. I'm going to be a good neighbor to the community," Schoeb said.

Rodney Rhodes told the room, "I do not consider this spot-zoning. There's a mixture including B2 at Hershey Tire. There is other B2 property, there is B1 property, and residential."

Commission chair Judith Wiegand said that any drainage issues will be dealt with as part of the process.

Schoeb spoke briefly about adding "parking advice" information on the website to let people know the best places to park and to direct them to parking outside of the neighborhood.

Wiegand gave her own directions to where she thought that information should be: "Next to the menu, please."

The commission then voted unanimously to recommend approval of the rezoning. Rhodes noted the issue would be before City Council in October.

# Staunton Council gives go-ahead on new brewery at former Coca-Cola plant



**Patrick Hite**

Staunton News Leader

Published 1:56 p.m. ET Oct. 13, 2023

STAUNTON — City Council unanimously approved a rezoning request Thursday night that brought John Schoeb one step closer to creating a 15- to 20-barrel microbrewery and tasting room at the site of the former Coca-Cola Bottling Works facility on North Augusta Street.

A restaurant may be added later, but for now Schoeb's plans are to brew beer for both Pro Re Nata brewery and music venue in Crozet, which he owns, and Chip Clarke's latest venture, The Steam Plant, located at 420 Richmond Ave. near the intersection with Greenville Avenue. Clarke purchased that property in 2017 and plans to create a music event space, which he hopes to break ground on this year.

"Will there be a restaurant in the future? Probably." Schoeb said when addressing council. "It's years down the road."

Instead of a restaurant now, Schoeb said he's spoken with restaurants in the area that he will partner with to deliver food to people at the new brewery.

The lot is approximately 30,000 square feet and the building is approximately 26,000 square feet, per city officials. In the 1970s, Coca Cola ceased operations at this location and moved to its current location in Jolivue. The building is located at 709 N. Augusta St.

The next steps are finalizing the building plans and getting approval for the historic renovations, Schoeb told The News Leader Friday.

"Asbestos identification and a removal planning has begun," he said. "Once that is finalized then we will apply for permits to begin removal of the asbestos."

Schoeb said they are bidding out the entire renovation currently and hope to have "some hard numbers in the next few weeks."

Once all permits and approvals are received, Schoeb said construction would begin. He anticipates a year from that point to opening.

"We are required, even with the new zoning approval, to serve our product on site," he said. "Therefore we will be opening the brewery and tasting room at the same time."

Schoeb said he's been trying to buy the building since 2016. It took until recently to reach an agreement.

With the building taking up most of the lot, there is no room for parking. Rodney Rhodes, Staunton's senior planner, said the Staunton City Code was amended in 2009 to add exceptions to the off-street parking requirements to exempt commercial buildings with little or no front, side or rear setbacks.

"There is no room on this lot for parking," Rhodes told council. "I would note that this amendment to the parking requirements was done to encourage this type of redevelopment of existing commercial buildings."

Schoeb is in talks with two neighbors about using their property for parking.

Rhodes said city staff has acknowledged that this brewery will create more traffic in the area, but the beer production will not create smoke, odor, dust or noise. Those have been the main concerns, per Rhodes, from anyone who has expressed objections to the rezoning request. The planning commission approved the request.

The city has also received about 40 emails in favor of the proposal and just four against.

During the public hearing Thursday, only one person, Clinton Davis, spoke against the proposal. The Sunnyside Street resident said most of the residents of the neighborhood surrounding the property aren't in favor.

"I don't know what emails you have, but I have never seen this gentleman in my neighborhood at all," Davis said, motioning toward Schoeb. "He hasn't been here. He hasn't come up and talked to nobody."

But others spoke in favor.

"I am very much in support of what we need to do in order to rezone this property so it can become productive," Brenda Mead said via Zoom. "It can add value to the neighborhood."

Schoeb, a retired dentist, started Pro Re Nata eight years ago, converting an old Moose lodge in Crozet into the venue.

"It was an eyesore," Schoeb said. "A lot of people said knock it down. We didn't want to do that. We put significant time, money and effort and converted the old building into something we're really proud of."

He said there have been very few complaints from neighbors in Crozet and the complaints he's received have been addressed.

"I'm a good neighbor to the people around Pro Re Nata brewery," Schoeb said.

Schoeb told The News Leader that he was very happy with the interaction he's had with Staunton officials.

"I am so grateful for the professionalism and eagerness of the Staunton officials and council members to help us and guide us through this process," he said. "It is refreshing to have local government that honestly wants to help small business develop and succeed."