**2026-0427** Public Hearing and Request for Conditional Use Recommendation for alcoholic beverage sales for onsite consumption at Don Armando's Mexican Cuisine, located at 1431 N. Rochester Rd., on the west side of Rochester Rd and south of Tienken in an outlot within the North Hill shopping center, zoned NB Neighborhood Business with the FB Flex Business Overlay, Parcel No. 15-10-226-041; The Two Amigos Group LLC, Applicant

*(Staff report dated 10/6/26, Development Application, Applicant's Letter dated 9/16/26, Environmental Impact Statement, Site Plan, Floor Plan, Rendering, Menu, Public Hearing Notice, and Public Comment had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)*

*Present for the applicant were Armando Rodriquez, owner and chef, Sam Thweni, owner, and Johnny Thomas, liquor license consultant.*

*Chairperson Hooper introduced the next agenda item: a public hearing and request for conditional use approval for alcoholic beverage sales for onsite consumption at Don Armando's Mexican Cuisine.*

*Mr. Thomas, representing the applicants, introduced himself alongside owners Mr. Rodriguez and Mr. Thweni. Mr. Thomas provided background on the locally owned restaurant, noting that Mr. Armando has been a community member for over 35 years and successfully transitioned the business from a food truck to a permanent establishment. He highlighted that the restaurant has been operating for nearly two years with zero health code violations. Mr. Thomas stated that adding alcoholic beverage service is intended to provide a customary amenity for a full-service restaurant rather than fundamentally change the nature of the business, and he confirmed that management and staff will receive certified alcohol service training.*

*Mr. Thomas also proactively addressed a written public comment regarding the restaurant's proximity to a nearby school. He explained that per Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) rules, the 500-foot notification radius for churches and schools is measured by driving distance from address to address, rather than a straight line. He detailed that the driving distance from the restaurant to North Hill Elementary School is 1,227 feet. To further alleviate concerns, he pointed out that several other nearby establishments already hold liquor licenses, including Hamlin Pub (located directly adjacent to the school), Meijer, and the Golden Eagle Bar and Grill, which is located in the same shopping plaza as Don Armando's.*

*Mr. McLeod provided a brief staff report, confirming the requested conditional use aligns with the property's NB zoning. He noted that if the applicant is granted the quota license, they plan to double their current 45-person capacity by expanding into the adjacent tenant space. He confirmed the proposed hours of operation and that no outdoor seating is included in the application. Chairperson Hooper reiterated that obtaining a quota license is not guaranteed, and the applicant would need to purchase one on the open market if their quota request is ultimately denied by the City Council.*

*Chairperson Hooper opened and immediately closed the public hearing, as no*

*comment cards were submitted. Ms. Neubauer then jokingly stated she was continuing the attempt to rehabilitate her reputation by making a motion to approve the conditional use request. Mr. Gallina supported the motion.*

*During the discussion on the motion, Mr. Dettloff asked Mr. Rodriguez about his history in the community and other restaurant locations. Mr. Rodriguez confirmed he has been part of the community for 35 years and has operated at the current location for two years. While this is the only location he currently owns, he detailed his extensive industry experience working as a chef and kitchen manager at various local establishments. He highlighted his past roles, which include six years at the Royal Park Hotel, managing operations at Bar Louie, and working as a sous chef for Cameron Mitchell restaurants. He emphasized that this extensive background has given him significant experience with customer service and managing alcohol service compliance, particularly regarding checking IDs and adhering to regulations.*

*Mr. Rodriguez continued detailing his background, explaining that after his last job managing Granite City and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, his children, who attended Rochester High School, suggested he and his wife purchase a food truck to find more stability. He shared that he has worked in the food industry since he was 16 years old in Mexico and was involved in opening Senior Frogs in downtown Rochester years ago. He recounted a brief stint working for Bar Louie in Florida before his wife convinced him to return to Rochester. Operating the food truck, he served locations like Innovation Hills Park and the Rochester High School parking lot, where he donated a portion of his sales to the school.*

*Mr. Rodriguez emphasized his passion for customer service and serving high-quality, fresh food made to order without the use of microwaves or freezers. He expressed a desire to elevate the restaurant's offerings by adding alcohol service and expanding into the adjacent tenant space, which was formerly occupied by the Asian Garden restaurant and has been vacant for nearly three years.*

*He also highlighted his ongoing commitment to the community, noting that he frequently donates food and gift cards for local fundraising events, including those for the neighborhood near Stony Creek and North Hill Elementary School. Mr. Dettloff praised Mr. Rodriguez's wealth of experience and commended his wife's wise desire to return to the City. He concluded by noting how impressive it is that Mr. Rodriguez has maintained a pristine record with no liquor control violations throughout his extensive career in the industry. Mr. Rodriguez further emphasized his commitment to quality and safety by noting that his most recent health department inspection two months prior resulted in a perfect 100 percent score with zero violations, and he brought the physical report to the meeting as proof. Mr. Dettloff wished him luck and reiterated his support for the project.*

*Mr. Hetrick praised Mr. Rodriguez's 35-year history in the area and his progression in the industry. Noting that his own children graduated from Rochester High School, Mr. Hetrick expressed gratitude for the restaurant's ongoing support of the school. He commended the applicant's commitment to strictly following all laws and regulations regarding alcohol service without cutting*

*corners. Ms. Denstaedt echoed this praise, stating that Mr. Rodriguez's journey from operating a food truck to expanding a permanent brick-and-mortar restaurant is a beautiful example of living the American dream.*

*Ms. Neubauer also expressed her admiration, sharing that as a first-generation immigrant herself, she deeply connected with his story of hard work and achieving the American dream. She quoted a phrase from her mother, stating that "love is given when nothing is expected in return," and praised Mr. Rodriguez's selfless, continued investment in the community, local youth, and schools. She thanked him for his contributions to the City and once again commended his wife's wisdom in choosing to return to Rochester Hills.*

*Following the Commission's discussion, Chairperson Hooper summarized the active motion made by Ms. Neubauer and supported by Mr. Gallina and then called for a roll call vote on the motion.*

**A motion was made by Neubauer, seconded by Gallina, that this matter be Recommended for Approval to the City Council. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye** 9 - Brnabic, Denstaedt, Hooper, Neubauer, Struzik, Weaver, Dettloff, Gallina and Hetrick

***Resolved,*** the Rochester Hills Planning Commission hereby recommends to City Council Approval of the Conditional Use for Don Armando's Mexican Cuisine at 1431 N. Rochester Rd. to allow sales for on premises alcoholic beverage consumption associated with a restaurant use, based on documents received by the Planning Department on September 13, 2026 with the following findings:

**Findings**

1. The proposed use will promote the intent and purpose of the Zoning Ordinance.

2. The existing building and proposed conditional use have been designed and is proposed to be operated, maintained, and managed so as to be compatible, harmonious, and appropriate in appearance with the existing and planned character of the general vicinity, adjacent uses of land, and the capacity of public services and facilities affected by the use.

3. The existing restaurant use with the proposed conditional use should continue to have a positive impact on the community as a whole and the surrounding area by providing additional /modified eating and gathering opportunities within this area of the City and the proposed operators of the business have extensive experience operating restaurant businesses within the City.

4. The existing restaurant use and the proposed conditional use are served adequately by essential public facilities and services, such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, water and sewer, drainage ways, and refuse disposal.

5. The existing development and proposed use should not be detrimental, hazardous, or disturbing to existing or future neighboring land uses, persons, property, or the public

welfare. In addition, a use of this nature falls in line with the Neighborhood Business District.

6. The proposal will not create additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services that will be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.

**Conditions**

1. City Council approval of the Conditional Use.

2. If, in the determination of City staff, the intensity of the use changes or increases, in terms of traffic, noise, hours, lighting, odor, or other aspects that may cause adverse off-site impact, City staff may require and order the conditional use approval to be remanded to the Planning Commission and City Council as necessary for re-examination of the conditional use approval and conditions for possible revocation, modification or supplementation.