

Big news for downtown Sandusky, June 25, 2015, Sandusky Register

Sandusky is open for business. City commissioners approved plans for several businesses, backed with money from a fall Issue 8 tax increase, during Monday's public meeting. Both projects aim to spur economic development and eliminate blight and nuisance properties — key promises officials made when campaigning for increasing the income and admissions tax rates.

Getting the boot Ferndock - Water Street Bar and Grille, closed for several months, is no more. The biggest transformation to be seen in that area in a while is coming in the form of a \$2.5 million project. The city approved a \$100,000 loan to Cleveland developer Rick Semersky, president of VIP construction company. That loan will be paid back, with interest, within two years. The city will then use that money to fund other projects.

Semersky has restored historic buildings, such as Cleveland's Sterle's Country House on East 55th Street. He is in the process of rebuilding Bonna Avenue, which includes converting a 42,000-square-foot building into a space called Hub 55. That project is a mixed-use space, similar to what he has planned for Sandusky.

Semersky has purchased the building that once housed Water Street Bar & Grille in addition to two empty nearby lots. Semersky, a Sandusky Yacht Club member, plans to turn Water Street Bar and Grille into an updated high-end restaurant and bar called The Leaking Boot, a nod to The Boy with the Boot. It will be open this June at the latest. He is currently looking for a strong general manager with the help of executive chef Jeff Jarrett, who works with Semersky in Cleveland. "There will not be much change," Semersky said.

Semersky will also restore the building at 125 Market St., another building he owns. The street level will soon be offered for retail space.

Brewing up a new business - Ferndock Brewing, owned by Sandusky natives Kyle Roth, his brother Zac and cousins Jared and Drew Opfer, have partnered with Semersky, who will construct a brewery just for them. It will be the first brewery in Sandusky since the Prohibition Era. Windows may be enlarged to take advantage of the natural light and the views. "Breweries are family-friendly places," Roth said. "This will be a comfortable place."

Specific details are still being hammered out, but Ferndock Brewing will have a large open space. Light will flood the space. Ceilings will have to be taller than normal to accommodate brewing tanks.

Patrons will be able to sample craft brews at a tasting bar. Ferndock will share a kitchen with the Leaking Boot, allowing its customers to grab a small plate to go with their craft beer. A beer garden patio will wrap around the side of the Leaking Boot and along the back of Ferndock Brewing. In a perfect move of big city elegance, Ferndock Brewing will have a rooftop deck where people can gaze upon the Sandusky Bay, drink in hand, while they enjoy the cool summer breeze coming off the bay and the conversation of friends. Construction on Ferndock Brewing is expected to be complete by 2017.

The Leaking Boot, former Water Street Bar & Grille will open in July, not June as previously reported. The business assured its fans through a post via Facebook... "We have not forgotten about you, Sandusky. Working on getting everything in order. Looks like we will have the doors open sometime in July."

