

Nicky G's has enormous response to soft opening for lunch

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
July 11 2017 4:34 PM



ALTON - After originally being denied a special use permit by the Alton Planning and Zoning Commission, Nicky G's had a soft opening for lunch over the weekend with a tremendous response.

Located at 1801 State St. in Alton, Nicky G's offers a wide selection of Italian fare as well as traditional favorites, such as Grandma Judy's chicken salad, a dish named for owner, Steve Gehrs's grandmother. He opened the restaurant with his wife, Dee Gehrs, who manages the kitchen and menu, which includes as many as six salads, six pastas, six pizzas and three sandwiches. Since its opening, Steve Gehrs said Nicky G's has been surprisingly popular among Altonians.

"We were so busy Saturday, we opened the door and had a line of people already waiting," he said. "We sold out of half the food. We did not expect so many people. We are still in soft opening mode, and are trying to get a routine in place."

Nicky G's is located in a century-old building, which originally housed a grocery store from 1920-1970. After that, it contained a lawnmower business.

When the Gehrses tried to move into the building to establish their Italian eatery, it was not zoned for commercial use, despite being used as a commercial location for the better part of 100 years. When they applied for a special use permit, they were initially rejected by the Alton Planning and Zoning Commission.

After that rejection, they took the matter to the city council, which approved the special use permit. The planning and zoning commission then overturned its original ruling and allowed the business to be established.

The interior of Nicky G's is reminiscent of Alton's olden days with black and white photographs of the city as well as an antique radio collection lining the walls.

"I am a bit of a collector of old radios," Steve Gehrs said. "My grandpa had quite a few, and my wife was in charge of decorating. She thought they would be a neat addition to the place, and go well with all our black and white photographs."

Currently, Nicky G's is only opened for lunch. Steve Gehrs said he is not sure when or if that will change in the near future. He also said he has no date confirmed for a future grand opening.

