

# **"Numbers" blamed for Elijah P's closure**

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ALTON - On Saturday evening, Russ Smith, owner of Elijah P's, announced to a staff of approximately 25 the bar and burger joint would be closing on New Year's Day 2018, never to reopen again.

Monday, Smith said the numbers "are just not working," in regards to the closure. After an emotional goodbye announcement to his staff, Smith, and many of his employees,

said the entire workforce at the business "felt like a family." When the closure was announced, many people took to Facebook blaming lack of foot traffic due to its location across Highway 67, and debated about its service. Ultimately, however, Smith said the decision to close came down entirely to numbers.

"It is my sad assignment today to announce the closing of our restaurant on December 31," Smith said via Facebook Messenger. "We've done our best to bring a special venue to the area, and are very proud of the place we have created. Unfortunately, the numbers are just not working, and that is the only reason for this decision. An immeasurable thanks goes out to my staff, for their hard work and passion for our restaurant. As with many small businesses, our long hours, our achievements and our stumbles, have created a loving family. I will miss them all more than they know. Likewise, thanks to our many fans, regulars who appreciated and supported Elijah P's for those two and a half years. We are so grateful for all of you."

Following the announcement to his staff, both Smith and workers said they were worried about the timing of the closure, adding it was close to the holidays, and those 25 people will be looking for work at the start of the new year. Because of that, many are hoping to find new jobs at local establishments in the coming days and weeks.

An event has been planned by Michael Hawkins for Dec. 31 at Elijah P's - the last day it will be in business. Called "Happy New Year For All," the event is hoping to bring friends and fans of the restaurant to celebrate one last day there and ring in the New Year - something which will be bittersweet to the people of Elijah P's.

When asked what would happen to the building, which has undergone several improvements under Smith's ownership, including a back patio and bar space and revival of an old warehouse, Smith said he was not yet sure, but would make a decision in the coming month.

The closure of Elijah P's will not affect Smith's other business, Bossanova.