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Piasa Body Art vying to relocate in downtown Alton

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Established local business is seeking public support to earn special use permit



(April 20, 2015 – ALTON, IL) Chris Hinkle, owner of Piasa Body Art, has been operating his successful business on the Beltline in Alton, IL since 2008, but he believes that the time is right to relocate Downtown in order to help advance the growing arts district on East Broadway. The entrepreneur invites the public to lend their support as he makes his request for a special use permit at the Alton City Plan Commission on Tues, April 28th at 1:15 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Council Chambers, located at Alton City Hall - 101 W. 3rd Street.

Broadway west of Ridge Street is not currently zoned for a body art establishment, but Hinkle has found an ideal building one block into the “no-tattoo zone” at the corner of Broadway & Henry Street. If granted permission, Hinkle plans to purchase the building for his tattoo & body piercing studio and also expand to add a retail store that would offer high end art supplies for artists of many media.

Alton’s zoning requirements haven’t been revisited in 12 years, when the decision was made to exclude body art establishments. “I understand why the decision was made at the time, because at that time the industry as we know it was still in its beginning as far as what it took to become a tattooist. Where in the past a tattoo apprenticeship consisted of learning how to operate equipment, now more than ever it’s about art education, researching what supplies are best and why, sterilization and aseptic techniques and most important, being able to take care of your clientele.” Said Hinkle, “My establishment and clientele are a world apart from what tattooing used to be. So much has changed since the last time this zoning issue was considered; in this day and age tattoos and body piercings are much more commonplace and less stigmatized.”

Despite opening their doors at the beginning of the recession in 2008, Piasa Body Art has shown consistent growth for the last 7 years. Now that Piasa Body Art is a viable business with a successful history, Hinkle feels that he can demonstrate proof of what a quality tattoo shop would contribute to the Downtown district. Seven artists are currently subcontractors with Piasa Body Art, and with the expansion business is expected to double.

Hinkle tested the waters about getting the zoning changed when he first opened, but the concept was not well received so he chose the location at 3904 Homer Adams Pkwy. to get started, and has worked ever since to prove himself as a respectable business owner and build his case to bring tattooing back Downtown. “I have always wanted to be on Broadway, but I knew that I would have to prove that this isn’t a fly-by-night operation. I have invested my family and my life into the body art industry. To provide the safest environment possible for our clientele Piasa Body Art stays in a constant state of

learning, the key to our success is continued education. My plan is to be a cornerstone of the revitalization of Downtown and a positive force for attracting more arts-related businesses that appeal to the millennial generation and to tourists.” said Hinkle.

Piasa Body Art has become a destination with clients regularly traveling from Michigan, Indiana, Missouri, and Iowa to acquire a piece of body art, or to have one removed. One way Piasa Body Art has stayed innovative and educated is in being a charter member/partner with Tatt2Away, an innovative new process for tattoo removal. “Tatt2Away”, a patented all natural non-laser tattoo removal system that more completely removes all ink colors with few treatments.

Hinkle has spent years educating the public on the tattoo industry in order to change the stigma. “We have members of the Alliance of Professional Tattooists and the Association of Professional Piercers on staff, and we held seminars in the past on body art education,” he said, “Our shop has a reputation for having high-quality artists and a pristine level of sanitation. We are currently working with the Madison County Health Department to shore up their health codes, one ordinance in particular we are looking to make more strict is ordinance 1.15 in the “Body Art Operators Ordinance” which states, “JEWELRY shall mean any personal ornament inserted into a newly pierced area, which must be made of surgical implant grade stainless steel, solid 14k or 18k white or yellow gold, niobium, titanium or platinum, a dense, low-porosity plastic and or which is free of nicks, scratches or irregular surfaces and which has been properly sterilized prior to use” we believe at this time, Piasa Body Arts is the only body art establishment in Madison County using 100% implant grade materials. Before getting a fresh piercing, it is every person’s right to ask to see a mill certificate for the jewelry being used, proving it is what it is being sold as.” Piasa Body Art provides a mill certificate from the foundry that guarantees exactly what the metal is made of.

“While other establishments may offer \$20 services, Piasa Body Art does not lower its standards to compete with those who cut corners to provide a cheaper rate. The client and artist’s health and wellbeing are most important.” Hinkle has lost artists who were not up to the standards that he has instituted for professionalism. “I filter my staff in order to attract career-driven professionals, and believe it or not I also filter my clientele,” he said, “Each tattoo is a living business card for our artwork, so I choose not to take any work that may have questionable end results or compromise our positive agenda. I pride myself in staying innovative, offering the most modern equipment and newest techniques in painting, drawing and sculpting.”

The second component to the business would be added within the first year of operation – a retail store offering art supplies for many media. “Our business plan is complete for the art supply component, and one of our main suppliers, Trekell Art Supplies, is already lined up. They offer high end products geared toward the professional working

artist, no craft supplies – just acrylic & oil paints, canvasses, brushes. They are an independent company and their made in the USA products are not found in chain stores. We will have a wide variety of products in-store, or customers will be able to place custom orders on our website that can be shipped or picked up at the store.”

Hinkle adds that, “We are operating a viable business that attracts a lot of foot traffic that Downtown needs. This isn’t really a moral debate of whether tattoo shops are “good or bad”, but whether this business will complement the district and attract customers for the surrounding businesses. We would not be making any changes to the building that would change its character or prevent other uses in the future. Welcoming Piasa Body Art to Broadway would be a clear indicator that Alton’s Downtown district is moving in the right direction to attract a younger & hipper demographic who are into arts, culture and self-expression.”

An online petition to demonstrate public support can be found at: www.facebook.com/piasabodyart

More information can be found at: www.piasabodyart.com

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