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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Darien Invests \$310,000 to Help Restaurants During COVID-19 Crisis

Restaurants Eligible for Financial Assistance through New Food and Beverage Tax Rebate Program

DARIEN, IL. - The Darien City Council approved a \$310,000 economic relief package through a food and beverage sales tax rebate program to support restaurants and bars in the City of Darien impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program will provide financial support to local restaurants and bars that are subject to a 1.25% food and beverage tax and reopen to their full service when the State of Illinois' Stay at Home Order is lifted.

Darien Mayor Joseph Marchese spearheaded the program. He said, "We recognize that COVID-19 has placed a substantial burden on the City's restaurant community. This program will give our local restaurants and bars a better chance of succeeding when allowed to reopen by providing cash to help with costs associated with reopening their businesses." He added, "Darien is a City of 'we.' Our local restaurant community is an integral part of the Darien family, and our goal is to support this hard-hit sector so our entire community can succeed."

In Darien, the approximately 48 restaurants collect a 1.25% food and beverage tax on retail purchases or liquor, food and beverages contributing about \$580,000 in revenue annually to the City. The new rebate program will distribute approximately \$310,000 of food and beverage tax collected in the six-month period from May to October 2019 back to businesses in the same amount that they generated during that period.

Alderwoman Mary Sullivan said, "This new program reflects how vital local restaurants and bars are to community and how important it is that we help them thrive once again. As Chair

of the Administrative Finance Committee, I fully support this initiative to help restaurants and bars restock, re-hire and re-open. It is also critical that the Darien community continues to support our local restaurants by ordering take-out and delivery. We can all work together to help our business community during this very challenging time.”

Some local businesses have already expressed appreciation for the extra financial help and gesture of support. Janet Koliopoulos, family owner of The Patio in Darien, said, “[The City is] trying to make sure we stay afloat and continue as partners as we weather this storm together. What a wonderful place to live and to own a business! I know we will come through this most stressful time because of the backing of the entire leadership of the City of Darien.”

Mike Barraco, co-owner of Zazzos Pizza, said, “Supporting this community has always been a top priority in our eyes. When Mayor Marchese had told us that he would be giving us a check toward helping us get back on our feet, we were speechless. We could not hold back tears of excitement, knowing that we can see a light at the end of the tunnel. We have a saying here “Treat everyone like family” and that is exactly how we feel in this community.”

To be eligible for the program, businesses must reopen to their full service levels on May 1, 2020 or when the state Stay at Home Order is lifted. The City will send rebate checks to businesses that meet this requirement.

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