

No takers – \$1 M liquor license fails to garner bids



The township's newest bar/ restaurant liquor licenses remains unsold as no one bid on the license with a minimum bid of \$1 million.

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By Jaimie Julia Winters

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No one showed up for the Nov. 28 public auction of the township's new liquor license.

Applications were to be received by Nov. 15 with all pre-qualifiers being notified by Nov. 20.

Packets were picked up at town hall, said officials, but no one filed an application to bid on the consumption license,

which was set at a minimum \$1 million.

Since the number of licenses is based on population, when Montclair's most recent population count surpassed 39,000 the township accrued another consumption liquor license now at 13. A 1947 New Jersey law allows one consumption license per 3,000 residents. With Montclair's official population at 38,977 as of the 2010 U.S. Census, the township was allowed 12 consumption (restaurant/bar) and 13 plenary (carry-out) licenses.

In July, when the most recent estimate of Montclair's population by the U.S. Census Bureau came to 39,277 – an increase of 0.77 percent attributable to the rise of multi-family developments – the town became officially eligible for a 13th consumption license.

In the recent past, Montclair consumption licenses sold for over a million.

In March, Dai Kichi restaurant on Valley Road sold its license for a staggering \$1.25 million, the highest price paid in Montclair's history.

Last year, South Park sold its license to Fin Raw Bar for \$1.2 million, while the Pig & Prince paid \$755,000 to acquire its license back in 2012.

Thirteen distribution licenses are also permitted in Montclair and currently only 11 are active.

The current law based on population has created a monopoly driving up prices that only a few can afford, said Dr. Morris A. Davis, Chair of Real Estate and Professor of Finance and Economics at Rutgers University.