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# ECHO PRESS

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Photos by Jared Rubado / Echo Press

Small business supporters march in a rally to reopen restaurants on Tuesday afternoon.

ALEXANDRIA CITY COUNCIL

## City clears the way for restaurants to reopen

By Al Edenloff

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The Alexandria City Council has cleared the way for restaurants to sell food and alcohol outside starting on Monday, June 1, as long as they follow state guidelines.

To quicken the process, the council has waived requirements for the restaurants to hold public hearings or obtain conditional use permits for serving customers in outdoor patios. State standards allow this as long as the patios are an extension of a restaurant's existing building.

The restaurants must submit site plans to the city for approval and follow the state guidelines issued last week.

**COUNCIL:** Page A8

## 9 new homes planned for L'Homme Dieu

By Al Edenloff

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A major development to build nine detached single-family homes on Lake L'Homme Dieu received approval at Tuesday night's Alexandria City Council meeting but not without some controversy.

The council approved a preliminary planned unit development or PUD for the project, "L'Homme Dieu Shores," along with a conditional use permit, zoning district amendment and subdivision application.

The requests were approved on 4-1 votes with council member Roger Thalman opposing the project. He said it would add traffic, isn't conducive with the neighborhood, would lead to erosion and pollution, and cause flooding problems elsewhere.

Thalman also said the planning and zoning commission's public hearing on the project was flawed because people couldn't hear what was being said during the Zoom video conference.

**5 THINGS:** Page A8



# RESTAURANTS RISE UP

SUPPORTERS MARCH IN PROTEST TO RESTRICTIONS

By Jared Rubado

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Over the last 10 weeks, Alexandria restaurants have banded together to come up with ways to open safely. After seeking counsel with each other and medical professionals, they were waiting for the go-ahead to open up safely.

After the stay-at-home order lifted, restaurants around the state could open with outdoor dining. Tables must be 6 feet apart, with a maximum capacity of 50 customers. Reservations are required, with no more than six seated at each table. Servers are required to wear masks, and customers are encouraged to do so too.

While it's a small start for restaurants to bring in revenue, Kent Kopp of the Pike and Pint Grill says it's not sustainable.

"There's a lot of issues that come with outdoor dining," Kopp said. "If there's rain or bad weather, you don't get business that day. Restaurants are hemorrhaging money. We already missed Memorial Day, which is something a lot of places bank on. We appreciate the people buying gift cards and ordering takeout, but it's not enough."

Kopp is one of the critical pieces to the group of



Kent Kopp speaks in front of small business supporters at the Big Ole statue on Tuesday night in a rally to reopen restaurants.

Alexandria restaurants that have joined forces. He started the email chain that led to group meetings with various store owners. While he and other owners have written many letters to Minnesota's representatives, they decided it was time to make the point visual.

**RESTAURANTS:** Page A10

## Nurse opens primary care clinic

Facility is just 3rd of its kind in Minnesota

By Celeste Edenloff

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After working as a nurse practitioner for the last few years, Sandy Lauer saw disparity with how she was trained versus what she could do.

She said it seemed as if there were constraints in everything, especially time spent with her patients. Lauer, who lives in Alexandria, said the business of health care wasn't what she wanted for her patients. Lauer worked as a registered nurse at Alomere Health in Alexandria for

five years and then she worked as a nurse practitioner in Melrose at the CentraCare family practice clinic.

"This is not how family medicine is supposed to be," said Lauer, a mom of two young sons who received her doctorate in nursing practice in 2016 from North Dakota State University. "Health care is a big mess. But this is in no way a reflection on the health care providers in this area, it's the health care system in general."

Lauer didn't want to spend her entire medical career working in

a system that wasn't working for what she believed in so she took matters into her own hands. Just this past week, Lauer opened up her own clinic in Alexandria, Well & Company. The clinic is the third of its kind in Minnesota and the first of its kind in this area, she said.

Well & Company operates under a direct primary care model, which offers a monthly membership for individuals, couples, children, families and college students. Health insurance is not needed.

**CLINIC:** Page A12



Celeste Edenloff / Echo Press

Sandy Lauer of Alexandria, a nurse practitioner, recently opened up her own direct primary clinic in Alexandria.

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