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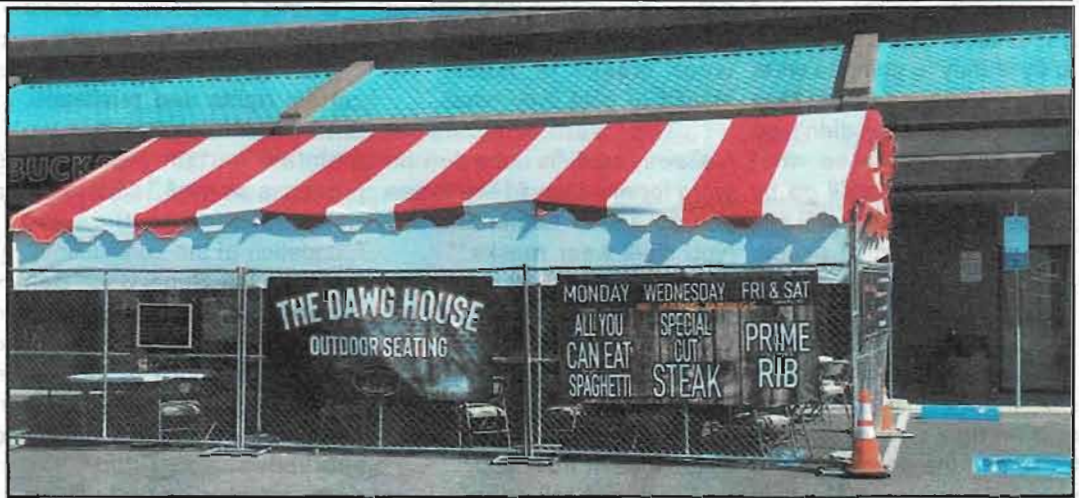
Coping with COVID-19 Board OK's temporary outside dining

By Nick Baptista

Restaurants and other Calaveras County businesses looking to expand their operations outdoors to comply with Gov. Gavin Newsom's recent COVID-19 restrictions received help Tuesday from the Board of Supervisors.

The board by a 5-0 vote adopted a resolution establishing temporary measures for outdoor dining and other outdoor business practices during the novel coronavirus emergency. The resolution allows businesses to apply for

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A before (above) and after view of the Hawg Dawgs dining tent after one of the first inspections following passage of a resolution regulating temporary outdoor dining facilities during the COVID-19 outbreak. Fencing at the center of the tent has been removed to allow for better emergency access.



Outdoor

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zero-cost permit during the pandemic.

Many restaurants shortly after Gov. Newsom's July 14 order began shifting their services outdoors. Tuesday's resolution helps businesses meet basic health and safety requirements.

Hawg Dawgs in Valley Springs was one of the first restaurants to go through the permitting process.

Hawg Dawgs owner Louis Menard called Wednesday morning for an inspection and had his later that day.

He was asked to change the

configuration of his dining area tent out in front of his restaurant so patrons would have a better exit in case of a fire in the kitchen. He was also asked to have a fire extinguisher in the tent area.

"I understand the rules and we're all trying to make this work and make it safe for all of us," Menard said about the inspection. "I'm pleased the county is working with us."

It has been a year of "adapt and overcome," Menard said for Hawg Dawgs, which in February was named the 2019 Calaveras County Small Business of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce.

When the shutdown came in March, the restaurant closed for several weeks. It re-opened

in mid-April for take-out only orders and gave away a roll of toilet paper with every order over \$22.

During the next few weeks, the staff took turns preparing the inside of the restaurant for an eventual re-opening. That day came on May 14.

"We instituted new cleaning policies on anything and everything," Menard said, and business came back to almost normal of what it was before the virus hit.

Hawg Dawgs on July 1 introduced a new and improved menu combining old favorites, new favorites and offering Valley Springs its first "Steakhouse."

"Things continued to go well," Menard added. "We can't thank the community enough for

supporting our restaurant. We encourage them to support every restaurant in town, as we are all in the same boat."

Then came the governor's outdoor-only dining order and Menard began making his outdoor preparations while waiting for the board to adopt the resolution.

With adoption of the resolution, businesses have to submit a site plan for the new outdoor area and an indemnification agreement to the Calaveras County Planning Department.

Planning Director Peter Maurer told the board permits could be issued the same day applications are submitted, depending upon the details of the site plan.