

September 19, 2014

Mr. Kevin Aksacki  
Gaucho's Village, Inc.  
135 North Maryland Avenue  
Glendale, California 91206

RE: Your September 15th Letter

Dear Mr. Aksacki,

On behalf of the Mayor and City Council, I am writing to hopefully develop a better understanding of both your complaint as well as the reason for your launching a social media campaign against the City of Glendale.

I fully appreciate and empathize with the anxiety and frustration you must experience in embarking on a new business endeavor, particularly as timelines are missed and corrections need to be made. And, as a public servant, I accept that often our employees will be conveniently, if unfairly, blamed by frustrated entrepreneurs. Indeed, as I read your letter, I too began to worry that our staff somehow had misled you or performed poorly – after all, people do make mistakes.

Upon closer review, however, the best I can determine is that you were ill-prepared to tackle the conversion of the La Cubana space into the new Gaucho's Village. Without a project manager and lacking close coordination with your contractor, our Building Safety and Fire Safety staff were left to react to changes from the original plans, failures to make noted corrections, and the failure to return phone calls in a timely fashion if at all. For example, you requested an express plan check and our staff returned your corrected plans in less than 10 days. Our project manager, Allen Castillo, advised you to call him when you were ready to submit for the re-check of corrections so that he could continue to usher the plans through the process, yet you did not call him back for four weeks because you forgot. Unbeknownst to Mr. Castillo, and apparently you, the plans had been submitted two weeks prior and were not moving expeditiously.

In another instance, you were seeking a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) by August 8th, believing that you needed only one mechanical issue to be resolved. In reality, however, there were a number of corrections that were needed and several inspections had not even been called for. Following that notification by our staff, you waited three weeks before returning Mr. Castillo's call.

There are other instances, to be sure – new condenser units on the roof that needed to be permitted, design features that needed to be approved and fire-treated (decorative wood), and changes to the kitchen that were not simply matters of moving basic appliances, but also addressing the industrial plumbing necessary to safely operate the equipment. The final episode involving fire/life-safety systems simply being operable seems to perfectly encapsulate this entire project.

Yet at every turn, City plan-checkers, inspectors and our project manager, were there to assist you in the process. Make no mistake, our staff are there to help you and guide you with this work – not to actually do the work for you. As an owner/operator/builder, you have considerable responsibilities and, frankly, you should have hired a professional manager to oversee this project for you.

As far as I can tell, City of Glendale employees provided you exceptional customer service.

And, whether you believe it or not, we wish you only the very best success. Having your business operating on Maryland Avenue is important to the revitalization of that street. I trust your business plan focuses on building a critical mass of diners and foot traffic in that area, such that we truly experience the “18-hour” business day that will reap great rewards for all of us.

Which makes your social media campaign all the more perplexing. Aside from being hugely ill-informed, or at the very least one-sided and unfair, you are telling potential patrons, investors and entrepreneurs to not come to Glendale. This is cutting off your nose to spite your face in a manner that could only be matched by the City reciprocating by publishing a blow-by-blow recounting of your project team’s shortcomings – something I certainly do not see the wisdom in doing (though we will provide a brief answer to the scores of emails we received in response to your letter).

At this point, having received your TCO and open for business (because our inspectors stood by for days while your contractor worked to get a basic life-safety system to function), I suppose all that we can do wish each other well and the best of luck in the future.

Respectfully,



Scott Ochoa  
City Manager

CC: City Council  
Community Development Department  
Fire Department  
Economic Development Department