



BOARD OF LICENSE COMMISSIONERS

City Hall, 718 Main Street

Fitchburg MA 01420

(978) 829-1820

Daniel Sarefield, Chairman

Richard Boscardin

John Zarrella

MINUTES OF MEETING

A special meeting of the Board of License Commissioners was held on June 18, 2020 over the Zoom meeting platform, and called to order by Commissioner Sarefield at 10:00 A.M. Commissioners Boscardin and Zarrella were also present. FPD Liaison Lieutenant Howe was present. Mary Jo Bohart, Director of Economic Development, and Steve Curry, Health Director for the Board of Health also joined the meeting.

I. DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL PROCESS FOR ANY TEMPORARY ALTERATION OF PREMISES LICENSES, AS REQUIRED.

Commissioner Sarefield called the meeting to order and then discussed that although there were a few applications in the system, there was nothing currently ready for approval.

Commissioner Sarefield thanked Mr. Curry for attending the meeting and then asked him to explain the Board of Health's view on outdoor seating.

Mr. Curry noted that the State was currently in Phase 2 of Step 1 and that seated outdoor service was permissible if the patrons did not leave their seats with the exception of using the restroom or leaving. Due to the many variations of restaurants in the City, he has allowed food trucks on-site.

Mr. Curry stated that most bars have a food permit, but may not have a commercial kitchen. As the Building Department has each location coded as a certain type of establishment, if the title of the business doesn't have the designation of restaurant, they can't be coded as such. He said that many were coded as "bar" or "lounge".

Commissioner Zarrella stated that there has been some confusion with the menu portion of the permit, and asked whether there was menu items that impact the designation.

Mr. Curry said that if there is no commercial kitchen, then the premises couldn't expand into meal prep.

Commissioner Zarrella noted that pre-packaged items often require meal prep. Mr. Curry said that he has kept an open mind to it as it is his goal to get businesses up and running and will review each on an individual basis. When questioned about the situation at the Log Cabin, Mr. Curry stated that he had recommended that they partner with the diner next door as they are technically a bar. He also noted that if they can safely serve food and use appropriate social distancing, he would welcome the opportunity to review their plan

Commissioner Zarrella asked if there could be latitude subject to each case.

Commissioner Boscardin stated that he would prefer that the City started at “yes” in helping to get businesses to survive.

Mr. Curry noted that he was keeping an open mind and that he was in favor of helping if establishments could come up with a plan that worked.

When asked if he had anything else to discuss, Mr. Curry brought up the discussion of whether River Styx Brewery could have entertainment as it had been ascertained that musical venues were a way of increasing transmission of COVID related illness. He would consider the application to do so, but only if there were a plan in place to protect public health.

Ms. Bohart reminded the Commission that two other licensees would have opened earlier if they had known they were permitted to have outdoor music as they assumed this was not allowed until Phase 3. She asked that every business be treated with parity so there wasn't unfair business competition.

Ms. Bohart stated that Strong Style Coffee and Hollis Farm already had permits for outdoor seating, so they didn't need to apply for this, but they had been holding off on live entertainment under the Governor's Order until Phase 3. She then asked what mechanism would be in place to approve such events.

Commissioner Sarefield noted that nothing specifically prohibits it as long as they observe the Governor's Order and social distance.

Mr. Curry reminded the Commission that it was important that a plan would be in place so that customers were not roaming. They needed to be seated and served at the table.

Commissioner Zarrella questioned who would enforce the plan.

Mr. Curry stated that the Health Department had the final say in granting approval.

Commissioner Sarefield noted that it might be helpful to develop a letter to all licensees that have a restaurant asking them to reach out to the Health Department to see how they could get up and running and recommend that they have a plan in place to do so. Mr. Curry agreed that he thought this was a good idea.

Shannon and Amy Keenan, owners of the Log Cabin, the spoke regarding their application, which was currently in progress.

They stated that the Health Department had come to their location to check on their plans, and that the inspection was lengthy and seemed to have items that changed. They were spending a lot of money on upgrades and were frustrated by demands that seemed to be ever increasing.

Commissioner Sarefield asked if they had a food prep area. The owners stated that they were using a side area of the bar to do so, and they had a commercial grade hot dog steamer.

Commissioner Boscardin asked if the owners had considered tying into the diner next door, but the owners stated that this would not be fiscally feasible for them.

Commissioner Sarefield noted that it would be helpful for them to speak with Steve Curry at the Board of Health as he had indicated he was willing to help each business.

Lieutenant Howe asked whether the owners had considered operating a grill, and noted that if they did, they would need a propane permit. Ms. Bohart stated that while this was a good idea, the owners should verify with the Health Department that it was permissible before purchasing equipment.

All three Commissioners offered to speak with Mr. Curry and offer their support of helping a business get restarted. The owners thanked the Commission for their support.

For new business, Ms. Bohart stated that Legends was filling out the application for a Special Permit, as well, so the word had gotten out that it was available.

It was agreed that meetings for Tuesday through Friday of the next week would be set up.

With no further business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary de Alderete, City Clerk

Approved



Daniel Sarefield, Chair



Richard Boscardin



John Zarrella