

MINUTES
SPECIAL LICENSE COMMISSION MEETING
4:30 P.M.
Monday, April 7, 2025
Virtual ZOOM Meeting

The License Commission held a Special Meeting on Monday, April 7, 2025, via ZOOM. Present were, Commissioners Jeffrey Charnel, Robert P. Simpson, Scott D. Uhlman, Cristine Derome, Janet Landerholm, Katrice Gerald, Lt. David Farrell, Deputy Chief Weeks and Executive Assistant Silvia Carvalho. Also present were City Solicitor Megan Bridges, and Assistant City Solicitor Stacey Verde.

1. Hearing on a request from Cardinal Spellman High School for a Special One Day Permit to Sell Wine and Malt Beverages for a Trivia Night Fundraiser to be held at 738 Court Street, on April 12, 2025, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Present was Mr. Reilly Johnston of 19 Della Road, East Providence, RI.

Chairman Charnel asked Mr. Johnston to inform the board on what is going on? Mr. Johnston stated that this Saturday Cardinal Spellman is hosting a trivia night in the school cafeteria to benefit some of the students that are going on a mission trip this summer. The trip includes a trip to Jamaica and one to the West Virginia area. In the past they have applied for a one-day permits for wine and malt to be able to sell alcohol, and they have a cash bar set-up at the event. It is a 21 plus event, so they invite their parents and friends, and is a big fundraiser for the two trips. The cash bar is something they have had a lot of success with in the past, so they are reapplying for this year. He appreciates the board squeezing them in to make this happen.

Deputy Chief Weeks stated that he is not in opposition to the event, pending two conditions. One thing is that they maintain a crowd manager, two he wants one of his inspectors to do a run through probably tomorrow to make sure the egress path is clear. Lt. Farrell had no objections from the Police Department. Chairman Charnel stated he has been on the Commission for some time and this event has gone smoothly in the past and they typically purchase the alcohol wholesale and he does not have any objections.

Chairman Charnel opened the meeting to the public and asked if there was anyone in favor or opposition, and if there were any elected officials that would like to be heard. He closed that portion of the meeting and opened it up to the Commissioners. Chairman Charnel stated that the application says 150-175 guests and asked him if they were selling tickets? He replied yes, they are selling tickets at \$20, raffles and the cash bar. Chairman Charnel stated again this is a ticketed event that has been held for many years he does not have any objections.

A motion was made by Commissioner Simpson to approve the Permit. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Derome and made unanimous by vote of the members present

2. Meeting to review public safety concerns related to the March 22, 2025, "soft opening" of UBA Brockton, LLC at 435 Westgate Drive, consider the representations made by UBA Brockton, LLC during the March 20, 2025 meeting, and provide the License Holder an opportunity to present additional information.

Present was Mr. Jeremy Hoyum of 690 East Seattle Slew Lane, Gilbert, AZ, and Mr. and Mrs. Ng of 181 Mason Drive, Manhasset, NY.

Chairman Charnel stated the Commission is calling the licensee in front of the Commission to get some clarification on events that took place for a soft opening. The Law Department did send out some information in regards to the event that transpired on the soft opening date. So, we asked that the licensee give us some information that they came up with from the letter drafted by the Law Department to address the safety concerns on the matter. He does not know if there is going to be a point person to speak at this point, unless the Commissioners have objections. Mr. Ng stated that he is going to let the head of operations Mr. Hoyum speak.

Mr. Hoyum stated that he is employed with the company and he believes that the basis of the complaint that the city has versus what happened on the day of the soft opening is a misunderstanding or a difference in opinion on what a soft opening constituted. They did reply with a formal response, which kind of outlined the facts of their position, but he will verbalize that again. The brand Urban Air the franchisor has a specific opening procedure from soft opening to grand opening and the soft opening is an opportunity to as Ms. Bridges presented pressure test the business on multiple areas. The practice was followed to the franchisors specifications as far as advertising, as far as opening the doors.

He believes it was a total of one thousand five hundred spent on marketing in getting people into the building in order for them to test the employees and give them a chance to run the operations and test the system, and all of the things that would happen during the soft opening period. That period typically lasts about two weeks and sometimes three to four weeks depending on the circumstances. There is a grand opening and the grand opening includes twenty to sixty thousand dollars in marketing, that generates an enormous event where they have entertainment, DJ's, confetti, countdowns, a ribbon cutting with local officials, and the Chamber of Commerce. They have specific guest appearances in some instances, which may include State Senators.

These events are left out of the soft opening period as well as birthday parties. This is a five million dollar plus investment, so the scale of money used for marketing may vary compared to other small businesses, the scale of what a soft opening is can be completely different than other small businesses. He just wants to make sure that it is clear that there was an interpretation that there was an intent to deceive the city, and that deception did not exist and he thinks that it was a misunderstanding a misinterpretation between both parties the city and the business in what a soft opening was. Chairman Charnel asked them if any of the other licensees had anything to add? Mr. Hoyum stated he would also like to point out that they have already addressed the three requirements that the city had for the grand opening which is April 12, 2025, this coming Saturday.

Those areas have been met such as scheduled security for Fridays, and Saturdays, an AED is present in the building as of today and emergency response plans are printed and at the front desk. They went over and beyond what the city has requested. Mrs. Ng is a crowd manager and all senior leadership will be certified as well. They are still in the middle of hiring because they lost a few of them after that day, and they will all be crowd manager certified. Just so there is an understanding the lost revenue from being forced to be closed by the city is anticipated at a minimum of one hundred eighty thousand dollars. Chairman Charnel interjected and stated that this is not about a revenue situation, we are talking about operational. He replied, ok.

Chairman Charnel stated that in regards to the reps that attended that meeting where the layouts were given for essentially the soft opening. He believes they mentioned on that day that it was a corporate type of thing, and there were a lot of people in the venue, more than anticipated. Even though he made it clear that he would like certain things if there were going to be that many people, he understands some people have taken crowd management courses, but in regards to the overall soft opening. What other things can you explain to the Commission will take place during the grand opening to ensure that their public safety concerns will be adhered to? Mr. Hoyum asked the Chairman to identify what the other public safety concerns were? There were no known disturbances within the facility. All disturbances that happened on the outside were handled according to policy.

As far as not letting people back into the facility and then calling the police. Obviously moving forward with the grand opening, they would have and do have the local police scheduled to be with them. Is there anything else that the board felt was not handled properly, that he can address specifically? Commissioner Simpson stated just so he understands their policies, what would be the target patronage on a soft opening and what were they intending to hit? Mr. Hoyum replied, they do not have a volume number, that is the goal when it comes to a soft opening. It is whoever shows up, and he can say there was another facility that opened a week ago from a revenue perspective before they had to do refunds that was approximately thirty thousand dollars, and for another facility it was seventeen thousand dollars, and can be as high as sixty thousand dollars.

Commissioner Simpson stated that he asking more in terms of people, that was his concern as far as safety. What he is trying to get is as when you see that there is enough people here and much more than we anticipated, how do you factor that and what are your steps after that? Do you say we are not going to let anymore people in, do we pause here? Mr. Hoyum replied, if there ever is a feeling and to give the board some perspective he has personally opened forty parks across the country and whenever you get to a position where you feel like something is unsafe or out of control you then stop allowing people in. He believes that is what happened towards the end before the incident. They did stop allowing people to come in right towards the end of the day.

There was nothing that happened inside and he can tell them that there was never more than based on the hourly attendance software more than two hundred to two hundred fifty people in the building at one time. That is an assumption based off of average dwell time for the company on how many people stay in the building for a length of time, and the capacity is over six hundred. So, they were not at fifty percent capacity at the time of the event. Commissioner Simpson stated he is trying to find out what their plans are to disperse. What if you are at a number which you are not comfortable with, do you stop letting people in? Mr. Hoyum replied, it is normal practice and typically that would be when a company is at capacity in a building and you would turn people away at the door.

There were corporate trainers there and there was plenty of management on site, there were no instances with safety where they needed to stop allowing people in, it was more about the pressure test feel. They could do the one for one exchange for when people leave the building. It is not a specific number it depends on multiple factors. Commissioner Simpson yielded. Mrs. Ng stated in addition to everything Mr. Hoyum stated they follow their everyday response protocol in terms of what they deem would create a safe environment inside the park as well. They had corporate trainers as well as a lot of folks from the corporate management team at the park that day, as some of the board have met them that were really helping them man the door. And, before anything escalated and she is sure it is on record she called the cops.

Chairman stated in terms of next steps one of his issues on that day and it was talked about were you have 75 staff members and most of the staff are very young. What are you doing in regards to training? He is trying to get to a place where they can feel safe about opening this business up in this community, that is what it really is about. He thinks it is in the best interest of the business to tell the public and the board what is being done to assure that these staff members and management are doing everything they can in regards to training, door management, and security. What is going on in this business to make the public safe. The facility is very big, it is fifty-two thousand square feet and can fit six hundred twenty- eight people in it. That is a lot of people in one place. These are some of the concerns we had when he chaired the meeting on the date the applicant went before the board.

We are here for safety he wants the business to thrive, he wants them to make money and be successful, but we are here for the patrons and for the person who can not attend this meeting. They may not be in the limelight of everything that the Commission does here. Is there anything that the business is going to do differently to assure the Commission that things of any nature will not happen, he will ask Deputy Chief Weeks and Lt. David Farrell to chime in after the applicant speaks. Mr. Hoyum replied, this is a proven business model and there are two hundred of these units across the country, you can not guarantee that there would never be an incident, that would be impossible and everyone on this call would agree.

Every single movie theatre, bowling alley, skating rink or whatever is in the entertainment industry and even the existence of the mall in general, when there is a large gathering of people there is a potential for things to happen. What happens is they have to mitigate whatever those possibilities are with training. He speaks from a position of an industry expert, not just an Urban Air expert and he is not saying that in arrogance. He has been in the industry for thirty plus years and the only other job he had was jumping out of planes in the Army as a paratrooper back in the day. What he can tell the board is that Urban Air the brand has the most amount of training for the entire industry. They have online training modules which every single employee is required to go through before being hired.

They have in person training which happens from corporate trainers that come in, and they have continued quarterly training that has to be accomplished both through video training and visually proven to a manager that it has been accomplished. He understands that when you talk about safety not every business is the same, and everybody says that they have core values, but Urban Air is a brand that does not have aspirational values like most companies that are shown on walks when you are hired and do not talk about it again. It is their non-negotiables that put safety above all else, and the way that it happens is in layers. They use action cards to monitor safety in the building, it is digital documentation of the attractions.

They also train to hire underprivileged youth in the community in an effort to mentor and help them become positive citizens. They do have de-escalation trainings for their management team on how to identify potential problems. They do not want to call the police every time there is a problem, but if it does get to the point where a line is crossed they will call the police. He asked the board if the city allows other communities to jump in to fill gaps if there is a need for security and is there a protocol for that to happen. He asked the board what he needed for security because they have not seen the cadence of the business or the true climate of the customer base. He has managed many facilities where security was only needed on Saturday and some, where security was not needed. Chairman Charnel stated the board will tell him when the security is needed.

Lt. Farrell stated he thinks on the weekends they should probably have two and one during the weekday. He pointed this out at the original meeting that there were problems at the competitor on the southside, and he anticipates this will be far more popular because of the proximity to the highway. Chairman Charnel also asked for two fire watch details on the weekend as well. Deputy Chief Weeks stated he can arrange for that when they put in their request. Chairman Charnel informed them that he heard adolescents were signing their own waivers and that can't happen, they must be accompanied by an adult. Chairman Charnel stated that if they are sitting in New York, California and Arizona, that is not okay with him.

Commissioner Landerholm asked them if they are following the Massachusetts employment guidelines for youth? Mr. Hoyum stated they have software in place to monitor those concerns. Lt. Farrell stated that there should be two police officers during the evening and one during the day Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and vacation weeks. Chairman Charnel stated that they should have one police detail Monday thru Thursday for the time being, and one Fire detail Friday, Saturday and vacation weeks. AED on site, and if there is an incident the licensee must appear before the commission, Crowd Manager must be on-site at all times. They must notify the License Commission, Police and Fire in advance of school vacation weeks.

A motion was made by Commissioner Derome to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Simpson and made unanimous by vote of the members present.

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Respectfully Submitted,

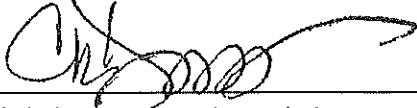
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey Charnel', written over a horizontal line.

Jeffrey Charnel, Chairman

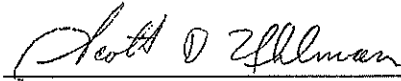
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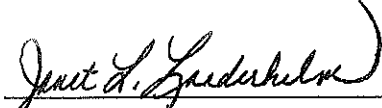
Robert P. Simpson, Commissioner



Christina Derome, Commissioner



Scott D. Uhlman, Commissioner



Janet Landerholm, Commissioner



Katrice Gerald, Commissioner