Woburn License Commission

Regular Meeting

Committee Room

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Members present: Chairman Thomas Skeffington, Commissioner William McGrath, and Commissioner David Gilgun

Also present: Woburn Police Capt. John Murphy, liaison to the License Commission

Chairman Skeffington convened the meeting of the License Commission at 5:30 p.m.

1. **Starbucks Coffee, 373 Washington St., application for Common Victualer's license:** Representing the applicant was Daniel Brennan, 373 Washington St., Woburn, MA. Mr. Brennan said he handles permits and licenses for Starbucks. He said Starbucks is moving to a new location next to 110 Grill in Woburn Landing. He said it will be a café only with no drive-through component. He said he hopes the restaurant opens on Friday. Chairman Skeffington said it looks like the application is in order. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to open the public hearing; all in favor, 3-0. Chairman Skeffington asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the commission in regard to the application. There were no respondents. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to close the public hearing; all in favor, 3-0. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to grant the Common Victualer's license; all in favor, 3-0.

2. **Greek Orthodox Community of Woburn, Inc., applications for special 1-day liquor licenses for the following: Saturday, Feb. 1, 2025, from 12-6 p.m. for a birthday party; Saturday, Feb. 8, 2025, from 6-10 p.m. for Elvis Night; Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025, from 6-10 for Mardi Gras:** Representing the applicant was Peter Lambropoulos, 70 Montvale Ave., Woburn, MA. Chairman Skeffington said the commission is in receipt of all three applications and he would like to consider them individually. He said the event on February 1 is a birthday party. He asked if a non-profit organization will be charging money at the bar. Mr. Lambropoulos answered affirmatively. Chairman Skeffington said this sounds like it is a private party and not a church event. Mr. Lambropoulos said the person for whom the birthday party is being held is a member of the church. Chairman Skeffington said the commission has to be fair. He said other people rent function halls for private parties and the commission does not waive the fee. He said he does not think it is right for the commission to waive the fee for events for which a non-profit entity is charging a fee. He said the church is making money off these events. Commissioner Gilgun said he agrees. Commissioner McGrath said he agrees. Chairman Skeffington said the board has to be fair to everybody. He said if it is a church event it is totally different. Chairman Skeffington asked Capt. Murphy if he has any input. Capt. Murphy said he can't remember the last time the police got a call for a disturbance during an event at the Greek Church. Motion made by Commissioner

McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to open the public hearing; all in favor, 3-0. Chairman Skeffington asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the commission in regard to the application. There were no respondents. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to close the public hearing; all in favor, 3-0. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to grant the special 1-day liquor license; all in favor, 3-0. Mr. Lambropoulos said the event on February 8 is a church event. Commissioner McGrath asked if the event will end by 10 p.m. Mr. Lambropoulos answered affirmatively. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to open the public hearing; all in favor, 3-0. Chairman Skeffington asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the commission in regard to the application. There were no respondents. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to close the public hearing; all in favor, 3-0. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to grant the special 1-day liquor license and waive the $100 application fee; all in favor, 3-0. Chairman Skeffington asked if the event on February 22 is a fund-raiser for the church. Mr. Lambropoulos answered affirmatively. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to open the public hearing; all in favor, 3-0. Chairman Skeffington asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the commission in regard to the application. There were no respondents. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to close the public hearing; all in favor, 3-0. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to grant the special 1-day liquor license and waive the $100 application fee; all in favor, 3-0.

3. **Smoke Shop BBQ, 2 Elm Street, status update:** Representing the applicant was Andrew Husbands, 2 Elm St., Woburn, MA. Chairman Skeffington said members of the commission have been getting calls about what is going on with the restaurant. He said Mr. Husbands is holding a pocket license. Mr. Husbands said they are starting to build. He said they have pulled permits. Chairman Skeffington said the commission was advised this would be a quick turnaround. Mr. Husbands said they have kept the physical structure intact. He asked if the chairman is inquiring why the opening of the restaurant is taking so long. Chairman Skeffington answered affirmatively. Mr. Husbands said they are very, very deliberate with what they do. He said they want the restaurant to succeed. He said it takes a long time for us to do all this stuff. He said their business at other restaurants is off a little bit. He said the economy is tight. He said their goal is to start hiring and training on March 1. He said they believe in the space. He said they believe in Woburn and they are going to get there. He said they want to be here long term. He said they want to be successful. Chairman Skeffington said when Smoke Shop applied for the license, the turnaround was going to be quick. He said the Methuen restaurant opened before the Woburn restaurant and the Methuen restaurant just got its license a month ago. Commissioner Gilgun said the restaurant is in violation of ABCC regulations. Chairman Skeffington said the commission is here for everybody all the time, as is the ward councilor. He asked if March 1 is the projected opening date. Mr. Husbands said that is what he is hoping for. He said there is no intention to keep a pocket license. He said it took them four months to get a demolition permit. Chairman Skeffington asked Mr. Husbands to keep the clerk in the loop. Commissioner Gilgun asked if the commission

wants to get input from Ward 6 City Councilor Lou DiMambro, who is in the audience. Councilor DiMambro said he has been in contact with Building Commissioner Thomas Quinn. He said he understands there was an issue with Smoke Shop's former legal counsel but he said it has been long enough. He said there are a lot of people looking forward to the opening of this restaurant. He said there are a lot of people asking questions. He said he will do anything he can to help. Mr. Husbands said they will need people to participate in soft openings. He said he needs email addresses to get people to come. He said if anyone wants to sign up for soft openings, they can do so on the website. Chairman Skeffington said members of commission are not allowed to take discounted food. Mr. Husbands said they will need about 400 people. He said he needs people to train their staff. Capt. Murphy said there have been no issues involving the police thus far. He said there are people waiting for Smoke Shop BBQ to open. Chairman Skeffington said the commission is here to help when called upon. He said the commission needs to ask questions because the anticipation for the opening of this restaurant is crazy. He said everyone is excited to have Smoke Shop BBQ here. He asked how things are going in Methuen. Mr. Husbands said things are going well.

4. **Arancini Center, 446 Main Street, application for transfer of Common Victualer's license and application for new Carry-In Alcoholic Beverages (BYOB) license:** Clerk said the applicant is working out some issues with his lease and has asked for a continuance. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to continue the matter until the commission's meeting on February 27, 2025; approved, 3-0.

5. **Shree Ganraj LLC, 100 Sylvan Road a/k/a 300 Trade Center, Suite 1410, application for a new Comon Victualer's license:** Representing the applicant were Dev Rana, Vidhi Rana and Harsh Rana, all of 300 Trade Center, Suite 1410, Woburn, MA. Chairman Skeffington said there are no signatures on the application page. Clerk said the applicants were before the City Council's Special Permits Committee on Monday night because they require a special permit for a fast food use and he made them aware of the requirement for a Common Victualer's license. Dev Rana said this is their foray into the restaurant business and they were not aware of the requirements. Chairman Skeffington said the applicants' landlord should have told them they need a Common Victualer's license. Councilor DiMambro said Building Commissioner Thomas Quinn and Cummings Properties had discussions about whether a special permit was required for this site, which was formerly a Dunkin' Donuts location. He said it is a very small unit. He said there was a special permit granted in 2008 with a condition it is not transferable. He said the Dunkin' Donuts went out of business in 2021 and the special permit expired two years later. He said the City Council agreed to grant a special permit to allow a small restaurant that serves chai tea and some sandwiches. He said there are no appliances or stainless steel cooking units. He said it will be a small operation. He said there is a separate entrance and an entrance through the lobby. He said the special permit issued to the applicant will also be non-transferable. He said if Shree Ganraj LLC goes out of business a subsequent tenant would have to apply for the special permit. Chairman Skeffington said his frustration is not with the applicant. He said the landlord was aware

the former Dunkin' Donuts required a special permit. He said the landlord should have advised the applicant of the license requirement. He said he has no problem approving the Common Victualer's license once the application is complete. He said this is the applicant's first go and the commission is happy to help them out. He said his frustration is not with the landlord. He said a little help from the landlord would have been great. Commissioner Gilgun said he agrees 100 percent with Chairman Skeffington. Councilor DiMambro said the applicant would like to get going as soon as possible. He said the space has been unoccupied for a while. Chairman Skeffington asked if anyone else in the audience wished to address the commission in regard to the application. There were no further respondents. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to grant the Common Victualer's license contingent upon the submission of a completed application, approved, 3-0.

6. **Approval of meeting minutes from December 12, 2024**: Motion made by Commissioner Gilgun and seconded by Commissioner McGrath to approve the minutes from the meeting of December 12, 2024; approved, 3-0.

7. **Any other matter that is legally before the commission:** Chairman Skeffington said the non-renewals of the 2025 liquor licenses for Taste of Brazil and Dog House Bar & Grill have been appealed to the ABCC. He said the commission has received a memo from City Solicitor Mark Salvati. He said the memo is self-explanatory. He said the commission has been asked to approve the licenses and then set up a hearing to consider the revocation of the liquor licenses. He asked if the other commissioners are available for a special meeting at 5:30 p.m. on February 20, 2025. There were no objections to that date and time. Chairman Skeffington instructed the clerk to inform members of the City Council and the Chief of Police of the special meeting. He asked anyone with questions about the potential revocation of the licenses to forward them to the clerk. Motion made by Commissioner McGrath and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to hold a special meeting at 5:30 p.m. on February 20, 2025, to consider the revocation of the liquor licenses for the Dog House Bar & Grill and Taste of Brazil; approved, 3-0. Commissioner Gilgun thanked the City Council for its input. Chairman Skeffington said he appreciates Councilor DiMambro's attendance. He also thanked Capt. Murphy for his participation in this matter. He said there has been a lot of contact between the commission and the Police Department about this issue. Capt. Murphy thanked Woburn Police Det. Mark Shaughnessy for his service to the department. He said Det. Shaughnessy retired yesterday. He said Det. Shaughnessy did a lot of good work. Chairman Skeffington also thanked Det. Shaughnessy for his military service to the country. Capt. Murphy said Det. Shaughnessy will be missed.

8. **Motion made by Commissioner Gilgun and seconded by Commission McGrath to adjourn**; approved, 3-0. Chairman Skeffington adjourned the meeting at 6:12 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD

Gordon Vincent

Clerk of Committees

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