

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Monday, April 18, 2022, at 5:15 pm, (Council Chambers)

Members Present: Lisa Rasmussen (C), Dawn Herbst, Becky McElhaney; Pat Peckham, Jim Wadinski

Others Present: Tara Alfonso, Ben Bliven, Jeremy Kopp, Mary Goede, Liz Brodek, Brad Lenz, Katie Rosenberg, John Robinson

Minutes of previous meeting. (3/21/22)

Motion by Peckham, second by Herbst to approve the minutes. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider approval or denial of various license applications.

Lisa Rasmussen indicated all licenses and/or renewals were recommended for approval, there were no denial recommendations.

Motion by Herbst, second by Wadinski to approve the licenses as recommended by staff. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider request to hold "Pregame" Tailgate Party, May 31, 2022 (Pregame Pub, 2002 N 6th St) DNA Investment Properties, LLC

The manager from Pregame Pub explained the owners, Dan and Ashley Dadabo, want to re-introduce themselves to the community as a new bar. He noted he has worked with Ashley Dadabo for five and a half years at Milwaukee Burger Company. They want to explore supporting local community events/businesses with the Tailgate Party. The Woodchucks Athletic Park stadium is right around the corner, as well as pair with Zillman's Meat Market for the food. They would fence the parking lot area with ID checks at the entrance and are working with the Fire Department for the proper placement of grills. There will be designated areas for trash and recycling bins. He indicated they would like permission for outdoor music featuring different local artists between 4:30 to 6:30 pm prior to games. The neighbors will be notified of any music, and they will be ensured the music is temporary for the parking lot party. If this event goes well, they would like to look at future parties. Tickets will be given away at the Tailgate for a future Woodchucks game.

Motion by Peckham, second by Herbst to approve the Tailgate Party to allow for alcohol and music in the parking lot on May 31, 2022. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider Central Business District Obstruction Permit (Oz Night Club, 320 Washington St)

Rasmussen stated Oz Bar would like to have tables outside on the sidewalk, but not for alcohol, noting no one was present to discuss the request. Mary Goede stated the owner, William Jones, indicated to her that he only wanted a place for patrons to go outside to smoke and that he did not intend to allow food or alcohol outside the bar. Rasmussen stated they will have to be careful to watch that patrons don't take their drinks outside with them.

Jim Wadinski questioned if the tables were to be right outside the front door of the establishment. Rasmussen stated the drawing shows it outside the front door on both sides of the planters on Washington Street.

Dawn Herbst felt tables were unnecessary for people stepping outside to smoke and that it would encourage people to take their drinks with them.

Wadinski suggested they table this until the owner could be present to answer questions. Rasmussen indicated he could be invited to the next meeting for discussion. Consensus of the committee was to defer action.

Discussion and possible action on request to amend Special Event Application for Dining in the Street (Wausau River District)

Rasmussen explained the request is to add dining on Saturday evenings to the already approved Wednesday evenings. There would be street closure and some outdoor music.

Motion by Wadinski, second by Peckham to approve the amendment. Motion carried 5-0.

Policing Task Force Preliminary Recommendations Presentation (Mayor Rosenberg & John Robinson)

PowerPoint Presentation can be viewed in its entirety: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCENitAHVfg>

Discussion and possible action on Resolution Designating the Month of May, 2022, as “No Mow May” and suspending enforcement of W.M.C. §6.48.010 Mowing Required and §6.48.040 Penalty from May 1, 2022 through May 31, 2022

Lisa Rasmussen stated the city participated in No Mow May last year and people had to put a sign in the yard to identify who was participating, however, it turned out to be a cumbersome process for the inspectors to manage. This year if the city participates, Inspections requested that we do so without the sign requirement.

Pat Peckham suggested if people kept their signs from last year, they could still put them out for the educational value of them. He agreed suspending enforcement for May will take away some of the confusion for the inspectors and relieve the burden of trying to get the signs into people’s hands. Rasmussen pointed out that it is not a requirement to participate in No Mow May, so if people want to continue to mow their lawns in May they can.

Motion by Wadinski, second by Herbst to approve the resolution designating the month of May as “No Mow May.”
Motion carried 5-0

Discussion and possible action on Resolution Urging state legislators to amend Wis. Stat. §125.17 to create a second tier of operator’s licenses or alternatively permit municipalities to place a restriction on the issuance of certain operator’s licenses that would limit sales to those at Class “A” and “Class A” establishments only, recognizing there is a distinction between businesses holding Class A licenses where alcohol beverage sales occur for off premise consumption only and businesses holding Class B licenses where sales and consumption occur on premises, such as bars, taverns and restaurants.

Rasmussen commented many times the committee has lamented the fact that we don’t have a server license that we can give to someone who just wants to work in a retail establishment, such as a grocery store, convenience store, or gas station. She explained the Operator’s license under state law can be used in either an on-premises consumption establishment, such as a tavern or a restaurant or it can be used to sell beverage to the public retail.

Rasmussen stated Pat Peckham contacted her about trying to change this and Becky McElhaney has also had some discussion with one of our state legislators, because we need and want people to be employed. There are jobs that need to be filled and people who want to work. The current law makes it difficult for the workforce who have no intention of tending bar, but work at a convenience store and cannot work alone without a license. This resolution asks our legislators to split the server license and give us the authority to either designate a license for retail only or create a type of serve license that is for retail only. She noted Tara Alfonso shared it with the League of Wisconsin Municipalities to have them support it and possibly other communities as well.

Tara Alfonso indicated she mentioned this question on a City Attorney conference call that the League formed. She found that many other communities have the same problem and are interested in it. She noted Claire Silverman of the League indicated she would pass on the resolution.

Becky McElhaney stated Representative Snyder was here last week and speaking with him he indicated that he understood the issue, has heard from others, and promises it will be taken up in January. She commented we have people that have background issues, but we want them to work to pay their fines and be rehabilitated, but we are saying no.

Rasmussen stated she hoped that at the state level, rather than try to create a separate type of license, which could take a long time, just take voting action to enable municipalities to manage this and put on a restriction of “retail only” in certain circumstances. She stated we should send it to all of legislators in Madison and encourage them take it up with deliberate speed.

Motion by Peckham, second by Herbst to approve the resolution. Motion carried 5-0.

WFD 2021 Annual Report and Operations Report from Fire Department for March 2022

Rasmussen commented the annual report has great data and visual depictions that will be tool to help answer questions from the community and for the department to tell its story. Discussion followed.

Wausau PD Operations Report (1st Quarter, 2022) & Tavern Activities Report March 1, 2022 through March 31, 2022

Rasmussen questioned what was going on at Newch’s, which was assessed 100 demerit points, requiring a formal expression of concern letter be sent to bring the owner before the committee.

Chief Ben Bliven stated on March 20th Officers responded to Newch's on a report of a large fight, as well as a report of a firearm. There were some people there with evidence of injuries, evidence of improper serving, and the owner was not there. The employees were having a hard time reaching the owner who had been there during the fight but left prior to law enforcement arrival. An Officer spoke to him later and he explained he had to get some family members out of the building because he was concerned for their safety. He did not return until 6:00 AM when he called the department to turn over the video from the establishment. The video showed there was a firearm there and a fight.

Rasmussen noted the owner was called in before shortly after he was granted the license due to large parties, over capacity and fights. He had assured us at that time that large events would no longer be happening. She directed the Clerk to correspond with a formal expression of concern and invite him to the May meeting.

Chief Bliven stated in the first quarter they saw a lot of movement within the courthouse and court system which had stalled somewhat during the pandemic. Officers and detectives have been very busy attending court hearings and preparing for trials. Some big cases came to a conclusion with guilty pleas, including the homicide of Patti Grimm at the Pine Grove Cemetery in 2019 and two other homicides from 2018.

Bliven reported they have been inundated with complaints from businesses, downtown establishments, and citizens regarding the unhoused population. He indicated he has had meetings with Wipfli, Mark Craig (Compass Properties) at Washington Square, and the Library Director regarding citizen complaints of people sleeping, urinating, defecating, and having sexual intercourse in the ramps, as well as people aggressively panhandling. He commented it is a more significant issue than ever. He stated they are moving forward on some of the recommendations from the Police Task Force and have a job position justification for a Community Outreach Professional. We are working with Washington Square on trying to figure out how to fund a fulltime CSO for the downtown, patrol the parking ramps, and walk through the library. He felt it was important for the Council to be aware of this issue.

Communications

None

Adjourn

Motion by Wadinski, second by Peckham to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:42 pm.