

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Monday, December 20, 2021, at 5:15 pm, (Council Chambers)

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

Others Present: Tara Alfonso, Ben Bliven, Jeremy Kopp, Kaitlyn Bernarde, Mary Goede, Katie Rosenberg, Michelle Van Krey

Minutes of previous meetings. (11/15/21)

Motion by Herbst, second by Wadinski to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on 11/15/21. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider approval or denial of various license applications.

Lisa Rasmussen stated there were two denial recommendations for Operator Licenses for Austyn Savaske and Chris Summerfield. It was noted Austyn Savaske was not present.

Chris Summerfield addressed the committee stating he did not fully understand the process for which his application was denied. He stated the letter indicated the reason was due to a battery conviction from three years ago and that it was an exempt offense. He stated he has come a long way since that incident and has moved to another state to avoid the person involved in the battery. He came back here specifically because his mother is ill, and he is working at a gas station. He noted he obtained Operator's Licenses in Rothschild and Weston prior to this, but his job transferred to the store in Wausau.

Peckham questioned what the definition of "exempt offense" is. Police Chief Ben Bliven stated individuals with an exempt offense on their record do not have the ability by statute to provide evidence of rehabilitation. Most offenses are non-exempt, which provides for the ability to show evidence of rehabilitation to be approved. Battery is an exempt offense. Assistant City Attorney Tara Alfonso added it means we are not discriminating against someone if we fail to approve them for licensing based on the existence of an "exempt" offense. She pointed out that doesn't mean the city cannot approve it but it is not required to; it is not employment discrimination under the state statutes to fail to make that exception.

Summerfield stated he works at a gas station and only needs the license to sell alcohol from the store. Rasmussen stated the license is city wide and could also be used at a tavern or other Class B establishment and there is no provision for a restricted license to sell at retail only establishments. Summerfield stated he has changed since the incident and is very patient with himself and everyone else and tries to think before acting or speaking in both personal and professional situations. Alfonso questioned if he had taken any anger management classes and Summerfield responded that he had not but was willing to.

Peckham questioned if there were other offenses on the record that the Chief considered in his denial recommendation or if he knew if the battery was alcohol related. Chief Bliven stated he did not know if it was alcohol related, it was domestic violence related battery conviction from 2018. There were additional charges from 2016 to which a no contest plea was entered for bail jumping and neglecting a child, both misdemeanors. He stated he reviews the policy the Council created when he makes recommendations on denial or approval and tries to be as consistent as possible. He felt the conviction was relatively recent and that is part of his consideration. He indicated his denial recommendation remains.

Motion by Peckham, second by McElhaney to approve or deny licenses as recommended by staff, except for Chris Summerfield to be voted on separately. Motion carried 5-0.

Motion by Peckham, second by Herbst to approve the Operator License for Chris Summerfield.

Becky McElhaney questioned if he was working at a Wausau RStore by Fleet Farm and if he had worked anywhere else. Summerfield confirmed he was currently working at the Wausau location and had previously worked at The Store in Weston and at the Schofield RStore location. He commented he did not intend to bartend or use the license for anything but retail

A vote was taken on approval of the license. Motion carried 4-1 (*Rasmussen was the dissenting vote.*).

Operations Report from Fire Department for November 2021

Deputy Chief Jeremy Kopp pointed out they changed the look of the monthly Fire Department Report to better tell our story as a department as well as an organization, and to make it easier to compile an annual report out of the monthly reports. He stated they would be happy to put in anything else the committee felt should be in the report. He noted it now tells the story from all the divisions as well as the charitable foundation and some of the things they are doing. *Report placed on file.*

Tavern Activities / Compliance Checks / Law Enforcement Activities

Chief Ben Bliven presented the tavern report for November 1, 2021 through November 30, 2021.

Chief Ben Bliven stated he had a conversation with Ashley, the manager of the Cop Shoppe, who indicated they are experiencing some difficulties with some of the clientele, and that she is working with staff on setting boundaries, knowing when to call police, etc. He stated they accepted a meeting with Lt. Felder for the first week in January where he will talk to their staff about de-escalation. Bliven stated the manager also commented to him that they believe some of the clientele from Roc's Place has moved there and that is why they are experiencing some of the issues. He indicated he received a message last week from the owner of the bar who expressed the same thing and that their intention is to close at midnight, effective immediately to head off some of the issues they are seeing from the really late-night bar crowd.

Bliven stated he talked to Ashley about the video system they have which is very old. Apparently, the only way to get video off of the system is to go into the system, hit play, and then record the video with an iPhone. He encouraged her to investigate new video systems to find one more easily accessible. He noted he is having extra patrols to the bar to help minimize the issues.

Adjourn

Motion by Herbst, second by Peckham to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm.