



ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ADVISORY BOARD

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Meeting
Tuesday, January 14, 2020
Alcohol Beverage Services' Meeting Room
201 Edison Park Drive, 1st Floor, Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Minutes

Members and Staff Present: John Gaughan, Chair; Vernon Ricks, ABAB Member; Juliana Levitt, ABAB Member; Lt. Ruane, Montgomery County Police Department; Susan Heltemes, BLC; Robert Dorfman, Director, ABS; Ron Price, Licensing, Regulation and Education; ABS, Joycelyn Rawat, Licensing, Regulation and Education; ABS and Evelin Chavez, ABS Liaison.

Absent: None.

John Gaughan called the meeting to order at 9:06 am. A motion was made to approve the September meeting minutes by Mr. Ricks, seconded by Ms. Heltemes, and unanimously approved by the members present.

Evelin Chavez, ABAB Update:

Ms. Chavez gave an update on the two (2) board vacancies. The vacancies were announced on January 8th and closes on January 29th.

Joycelyn Rawat, ABAB Member:

Ms. Rawat announced that licensee renewal notices will be mailed out soon. Online and in person renewal season will begin on February 1st. Renewal applications must be filed with the Board of License Commissioners no later than Tuesday, March 31, 2020. There is a \$50.00 per day late fee for applications received after March 31, 2020. No renewal applications will be accepted after Wednesday, April 8, 2020.

Keeping it Safe calendars are also being sent to licensees. These calendars provide licensees with helpful information on underage drinking as well as special dates/events throughout the year. These calendars were funded by a grant.

General Discussion:

There was general discussion regarding the problems in Downtown Silver Spring. The board members believe that it may be necessary for someone from the county council to inform the police department about the issues and suggest how to handle them. The problem is not that police are not doing their part to help reduce the issues happening in Silver Spring, the problem is how problems are being handled.

In addition to the issues in Silver Spring, the group talked about medicinal marijuana and the effects on the community.

Ron Price, ABAB Member:

Mr. Price informed the board members that the board in this county issues more severe penalties than any other counties in this area. He also said that the compliance check rate this year is at 75%, five percent more than last year. A total of 2 licenses were revoked last year.

While discussing the issues in downtown Silver Spring Mr. Price commented that the police is always notified when they are made aware of these types of issues. Mr. Price asked Lt. Ruane if he had any information about an office in Silver Spring that was selling alcohol but not much information is known about it at this time.

John Gaughan, ABAB Member:

Mr. Gaughan believes that the board should make suggestion to the County Executive regarding the issues taking place in Silver Spring. He believes this would help address the problems in that area.

Mr. Gaughan also asked about the memo from county council regarding the ABS retail store profitability and the response given by the County Executive office.

Susan Heltemes, BLC Update:

Ms. Heltemes spoke at length in the past week (this conversation was actually the day before our meeting.) to a longtime business owner in downtown Silver Spring. He expressed frustration on two issues.

First, due to changing laws, it is difficult for police to do more than shoo vagrants from one spot to another. Because of these changes, police get challenged by the vagrants who quickly return after being arrested – this breeds impunity in the vagrants residing near downtown Silver Spring. Public urination and defecation, drinking alcohol in public and sleeping on the streets is common. This business person said that Silver Spring streets are similar to the streets of Silver Spring in 1992 when revitalization was in its infancy. Gang activity and tagging are also increasing and the graffiti task force has been reactivated. Silver Spring is the place where you “can get by with anything.” The police are doing the best they can and are to be commended according to the businessman.

Secondly, the goals of the Nighttime Task Force are commendable, but the changes came fast and furious with much new activity in downtown Silver Spring. This change has given some business owners the belief that they can do anything. As a result, businesses are staying open too late and the noise level in some areas is a real problem. Again, the combined force of police and liquor inspectors has done good work but more is needed.

Robert M. Dorfman, ABS Update:

Mr. Dorfman informed the board members about the MOCO Political Awards for 2019. The Seventh State announced that ABS was awarded the Most Meaningless New Law of the Year: Liquor Monopoly Name Change. As of July, the county’s Department of Liquor Control was renamed Alcohol Beverage Services.

Mr. Dorfman also followed up on the memo from the County Council members to the County Executive regarding the \$5 million-dollar loss with the retail stores. He explained how the new financial system discovered the loss and that a turnaround plan is already in place. The department expects to reverse the loss over the next few years. With the expertise of the Chief of Retail Operations, we are hopeful that the loss will be eliminated soon. We have already gone from a \$7 million-dollar loss to an approximant \$2 million-dollar loss.

Mr. Dorfman briefly talked about the transfer amount transferred in 2015 by ABS in comparison to what has recently been transferred and that CE Marc Elrich has made a public statement on what he expects from the department which is reflected in ABS's five-year plan.

Mr. Dorfman announced that Alcohol Beverage Services will host Montgomery County's Biggest Whiskey Event on Friday, Jan. 17; 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. at the Clarksburg Village Liquor and Wine Store. The daylong event is expected to attract hundreds of whiskey lovers who want to purchase limited release and hard to find whiskey products.

The whiskey celebration will feature tastings, engravings, raffle drawings, barrel picks, bottle signings, special releases and an exclusive whiskey lunch with Maker's Mark Master Distiller Denny Potter. Fox 5 will be there shooting live segments throughout the day.

Mr. Dorfman explained that ABS is currently working with MCGEO to create new a 12-hour part-time maximum position instead of a 20-hour minimum one. ABS would be able to save an additional \$4.5 million in staffing costs over the next 3-5 years (including costs of benefits). This position will not affect any current employees unless they opt to change their status to this role.

Mr. Dorfman gave an update on rebranding the retail stores. ABS had selected a name for the stores, however, it was recently discovered that the name was very similar to a new business opening in the Kentlands. At this time, ABS has included the Office of the County Attorney for help in retaining an outside trademark attorney.

ABS is currently working on the Poolsville spirits only store. The plan is to open the store within the next few months. The Cabin John and Darnestown retail store will be the first two stores that will be remodeled. Using our new design plan, the plan is to move the Cabin John store from the inside of the mall to the outside. ABS is currently negotiating with the landlord for buildout assistance.

Lt. Ruane, Montgomery County Police Update:

Mr. Gaughan asked Lt. Ruane if he was able to obtain any information on alcohol being sold from residential homes. Lt. Ruane said he had no additional information at this time.

Lt. Ruane also informed the board members that the officers of the Montgomery County Police Alcohol Holiday Task Force devoted their full time and attention to detecting alcohol-related offenses during this holiday season. The eight-week task force began on November 13, 2019, and concluded on January 5, 2020.

From December 31, 2019, to January 5, 2020, task force officers arrested 32 people for driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (DUI).

During the eight weeks of the task force, task force officers arrested a total of 288 people for driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol and/or drugs.

Lt. Ruane also informed the board members that there have been some promotions within the department. Tom Didone is now Assistant Chief and that David McBain has been promoted to Captain of the Traffic Division.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the ABAB is scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Adjournment:

There being no other business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:27 a.m.