



ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ADVISORY BOARD

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Meeting
Tuesday, May 12, 2020
Alcohol Beverage Services' Meeting Room
201 Edison Park Drive, 1st Floor, Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Minutes

Members and Staff Present (virtually through Microsoft Teams): John Gaughan, Chair; Vernon Ricks, ABAB Member; Brett Robinson, ABAB Member; Christopher (Scott) Maravilla, ABAB Member; Susan Heltemes, BLC; Robert Dorfman, Director, ABS; Kathie Durbin, Licensing, Regulation and Education; ABS and Evelin Chavez, ABS Liaison.

Absent: Lt. Ruane & Juliana Levitt

John Gaughan called the meeting to order at 9:17 am. A motion was made to approve the January and March meeting minutes by Mr. Ricks, seconded by Ms. Heltemes, and unanimously approved by the members present.

Evelin Chavez, ABAB Update:

Ms. Chavez informed the board members that the County Executive appointed two new members on April 14, 2020. The two new members are Brett Robinson and Christopher (Scott) Maravilla.

General Discussion:

There was general discussion on the shortage of hand sanitizer. Mr. Dorfman told the board members he would reach out to the Chief of Retail Operations who has been in charge of ordering sanitizers for the retail stores to see if he knew of any distilleries in Montgomery County that were selling sanitizers and send them that information.

Mr. Gaughan asked Mr. Dorfman to explain how ABS is responding to COVID 19. ABS has had a plan in place since the beginning of March. The warehouse is fully functional and making deliveries 4 days a week. On March 30th, the Governor implemented a stay at home order. Due to that order, ABS increased its focus on social distancing for the safety of our customers and employees and established a drop and go policy for all deliveries. We are asking drivers and customers to keep at least six feet from each other during the entire delivery process. This policy does not allow our drivers to stay on the premises for the check-in of product. Employees in the warehouse as well as drivers and helpers are required to wear masks and gloves.

The communications center has been operating and taking orders suspended the use of the pick-up window at the warehouse to ensure the safety of its employees and customers.

Mr. Dorfman informed the board members that on Tuesday, March 17th ABS reduced the hours of operation at its retail stores in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Stores are now open Monday - Saturday from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. and closed on Sundays. As of now 24 of the 25 retail stores are operating. To comply with the Governor's order related to inside shopping malls, ABS has closed the Cabin John store.

ABS retail stores are requiring employees and customers to wear face masks when entering the stores. The stores are also limiting the number of people in the store at a time. Plexiglass has been installed in all the cashier areas and employees have been asked to disinfect their areas regularly. In addition, we have asked Montgomery County Police to provide surveillance at certain locations due to some recent incidents we have experienced.

Mr. Ricks asked about the possibility of opening the Cabin John store since its in an area that is not directly inside the mall, but Mr. Dorfman explained that while the store is closed, employees have been temporarily relocated to nearby stores. This store is also in the process of moving to a new location on the outside of the mall next to the Giant supermarket.

Mr. Dorfman told board members that all restaurants licensed by the Montgomery County Board of License Commissioners were allowed to sell beer, wine and spirits, along with closed lid containers of cocktails and mixed drinks for off-premises consumption along with a takeout or delivered meal.

While Montgomery County restaurants can now serve mixed drinks to go in sealed plastic containers while they remain closed for sit-down service during the coronavirus pandemic, this permission expires when the emergency order to close restaurants is lifted.

Businesses may make these alcohol deliveries to Montgomery County addresses along with a meal using their own staff. State law prohibits the delivery of alcohol by a third party, such as GrubHub or Uber Eats.

Mr. Dorfman said he knows about one restaurant in particular that is doing 30% of their normal business in carry out sales, and that a large percentage of their sales is alcohol. Because of the high margins on alcohol, they making a bit of profit.

ABS is getting warning stickers made for licensees to seal their closed lid alcohol beverages when selling to customers for takeout, to avoid an open container in vehicles..

John Gaughan, ABAB Member:

Mr. Gaughan explained the boards purpose. The Alcoholic Beverages Advisory Board is responsible for reporting quarterly to the County Executive and County Council on recommendations for the improvement of the alcoholic beverages control and enforcement activities of the County and of the operations of the dispensary and distribution systems from the standpoint of efficiency, service, and convenience to the public.

Mr. Gaughan asked Ms. Chavez to coordinate a date/time for the new members to visit the department so they can tour the warehouse.

Kathie Durbin, ABAB Member:

Ms. Durbin informed the board members that at this time the visitor's entrance and lobby is closed to the public to limit social interaction and maximize social distance.

The next Board of License Commissioners hearing is scheduled for May 21. This hearing will be held by teleconference. Ms. Durbin said ABS is following the Governor's orders. ABS has developed partnerships with other agencies which will be very important going forward. There are discussions on preparing ourselves for when businesses begin to open. And inspectors from all over the state are now having virtual discussions to better communicate with one another and be more transparent with one another.

Susan Heltemes, BLC Update:

Ms. Heltemes informed the members that one board meeting had been canceled but have met twice virtually. Show causes are on hold at the moment. The board received an award from Keeping it Safe for helping with the underage drinking reduction.

With support from Alcohol Beverage Services (ABS), the Montgomery County Board of License Commissioners passed a resolution to allow all restaurants with a current on-premise Montgomery County alcohol license to sell sealed containers of beer, wine, spirits and closed lid mixed drinks and cocktails for off-premise consumption along with a takeout or delivered meal. Ms. Heltemes informed the groups that she was one of the members who voted against the decision to allow restaurants to sell beer, wine and spirits for off premise consumption. This temporary license amendment follows the Governor's order to close all restaurants as a part of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) catastrophic health emergency.

Ms. Heltemes asked what ABS was doing with the money that was requested during the budget session. Mr. Dorfman informed her that ABS would be upgrading the Cabin John and Darnestown stores and opening up two spirits only stores in addition to the Poolesville store.

Robert M. Dorfman, ABS Update:

Mr. Dorfman informed the group the Council unanimously approved the FY21 Council Staff Recommended- Continuity of Services Budget, which is \$1,040,705 less than the FY21 Executive Recommended Budget of \$64,707,546.

Items not included in Continuity of Services:

1. FY21 compensation adjustments of \$740,705.
2. Increase of \$150,000 to add a new truck to the delivery fleet.
3. Increase of \$150,000 to improve the warehouse conveyor system.

At the request of the county council, ABS has provided its financial statements for the month of March and information about off-premise and on-premise licensee sales.

Mr. Dorfman also talked about the Keeping it Safe Coalition student video contest.

The annual contest encourages teams from Montgomery County public and private middle and high schools to create 30-second public service announcements to educate young people about the risks of under 21 alcohol use.

The winning entries receive cash prizes and a certificate for their affiliated school. In this year's contest, 70 videos were submitted from 15 schools.

The 2019-20 high school award winners:

- First Place - Springbrook High School. Students Matthew Bauer, Matthew Chu, Richard Nyugen, Ethan Stratton and Jaime Valencia. School sponsor Ian Carpency. Will receive \$1,000 prize.
- Second Place - Albert Einstein High School. Students Nicholas Benning and Vivian Monmaney. School sponsor Anthony Nappo. Will receive \$500 prize.
- Third Place - Montgomery Blair High School. Students Olivia Henry, Molly Howard, Andrej Radoja and Raquel Sklar. School sponsor George Mayo. Will receive \$250 prize.

The middle school award winners:

- First Place - Eastern Middle School. Students Peter Vicente, Grace Young and Keuyrbel Zewedu. School sponsor Warren Scheib receive \$500 prize.
- Second Place – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School. Students Mangor Bility, Jillian Dove, Samuel Hahm and Vivian Hoang. School sponsor Lisa Wroblewski. Will receive \$250 prize.
- Third Place - Eastern Middle School. Students Elise Burroughs and Lola Dammann. School sponsor Warren Scheib. Will receive \$100 prize.

The winning videos can be viewed from the ABS website.

Mr. Dorfman also talked about the employee that tested positive for COVID-19 at the Hampden Lane store. ABS immediately closed the retail store and worked with County health officials to determine and communicate the potential risk to customers and other employees. While the store was closed, it was thoroughly cleaned and sanitized to ensure the safety of customers and employees. The Hampden Lane store reopened about 14 days later on Wednesday, April 15th.

Mr. Dorfman informed the group that an ABS delivery truck was involved in an accident on April 21 off of Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring. Two employees, our driver and a driver's helper, suffered injuries that were not life threatening. Both went to the hospital following the crash and both are home now recovering from their injuries.

The Poolesville (spirits only) store is ready open but unfortunately due to the shortage of employees has not been able to open. It's now scheduled for a no publicity, soft opening on Monday May 18.

ABS had its capital improvement planning meeting with county council on April 28th. ABS has a six year CIP plan that was passed; approved by six (6) of the nine (9) councilmembers. The FY21 budget was unanimously approved the following week.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the ABAB is scheduled for Tuesday, July 14, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Adjournment:

There being no other business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:22 a.m.