

Council to reconsider Que Bar denial Business has undergone many changes

By Rachel Gallegos, Iowa City Press-Citizen, Friday, April 11, 2008

The Iowa City Council will reconsider its previous denial of The Que Bar's liquor license at a special formal council meeting Monday night.

According to the city council packet for Monday's meeting, "because of dramatic changes at the bar in staffing and practice, city staff now recommends granting the license application for the remaining six months of the original license period."

The Iowa City Council voted 6-1 Nov. 5 to deny the bar's liquor license.

The Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division suspended The Que Bar's liquor license Jan. 17 for serving alcohol to minors three times in a three-year period. The suspension began the first day students returned to the University of Iowa for the spring semester.

The bar had single violations in 2003 and 2005 and two violations in 2006.

The Que Bar appealed the 2003 violation to the Iowa Supreme Court, losing the case in 2007.

One of the 2006 violations was thrown out because the bar had a TIPS trained server.

The bar also was fined \$3,500 -- \$500 for the 2003 violation and \$1,500 for the 2005 and 2006 violations.

The bar's suspension for the third violation is up at 6 a.m. April 21.

If the bar has a fourth violation in three years, the bar's liquor license would be revoked, said Lynn Walding, administrator for the Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division.

In a letter from Matthew J. Adam, attorney with Moyer & Bergman PLC, Adam wrote that at the time of the liquor license renewal, The Que Bar's owner, Roy Yelder, did not have a bar manager on staff but was in the process of hiring a new manager.

He has hired two people to manage the bar, with one of the managers or Yelder to be on site at all times while the bar is open for business.

After hiring a new bar manager, Yelder fired his entire staff and is in the process of hiring new employees, according to Adam's letter.

All of the new employees will be required to attend TIPS training, and each employee will be provided a training guide and employee handbook.

"The Que Bar has a zero tolerance policy for any violation of the Training Guide and Employee Handbook," Adam wrote. An employee who violates either would be fired, he wrote.

Other steps the bar plans to take, according to the letter, include:

- All customers will be asked to show their ID when entering the bar. Minors will be given a wrist band and a hand mark.
- All non-alcoholic beverages will be served in bright, easily identifiable glasses.
- All servers and bartenders will be required to randomly check customer identification cards when they are inside the bar.
- Any underage customer caught drinking will be asked to leave.

In other council business:

- The Iowa City Council will vote on the first consideration of an ordinance prohibiting alcohol consumption between 2 and 6 a.m. Monday to Saturday and between 2 and 8 a.m. Sunday at locations where food, beverages or entertainment are sold or provided.

Violating the ordinance would be considered a public nuisance, with violations treated as a municipal infraction with enhanced penalties. A first offense would mean a \$250 fine, \$500 for a second offense and \$750 for a third offense.

- The council will consider Johnson County's request to add a skywalk from the new Health and Human Services building to the existing Administration Building.

The city has to consider allowing the skywalk easement above Benton Street between Clinton and Dubuque streets because the city controls the aerial rights of the city street. The city plans to host a public hearing April 29.

- The council will consider amending the private redevelopment agreement for Hieronymus Square, extending the project's construction start date, completion date and associated first tax rebate each by one year to May 1, 2009, Dec. 1, 2011, and June 1, 2014, respectively.