

City revises proposed liquor license law

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Port aldermen begin reviewing updated regulations after changes made to alleviate tavern owners' concerns

Port Washington aldermen on Wednesday were slated to review a revised version of a controversial liquor license law amendment.

The proposed ordinance change has been tweaked by officials after they met with tavern and restaurant owners and operators to ease some of their concerns about the new law.

City Administrator Mark Grams, who met with the owners and operators last week, said he believes the new version of the ordinance allays the fears of the owners.

"I haven't heard from anybody since then," he said. "Overall, I think the ordinance we've got is a good one. It's not super stringent.

"What we've done is made it a little friendlier for them."

The impetus for the changes is the controversy over the denial of a liquor license for the former Foxy's tavern late last year, Grams said, noting that several aldermen said at the time they wanted to see the city's licensing regulations tightened.

Most of the proposed changes only affect applicants for new liquor licenses who, if the new ordinance is approved, must submit significantly more information to the city before their application can be approved.

For example, new liquor license applicants will be required to provide a detailed business plan to the city for approval and, in subsequent years, to obtain city approval for any substantive changes to that plan.

This does not apply to existing license holders and, under the revised ordinance, will also not apply to family members or partners who take over a business, as long as they have been working at the business for at least one year, Grams said.

New license holders would also be required to meet with the police chief to formulate a security plan that could require the installation of security cameras inside the building but would no longer require them outside, Grams said.

The security plan could require a bouncer be hired by taverns on Fish Day weekend, Grams said.

Most taverns already hire bouncers that weekend, he said.

The revisions also reduce the number of causes for which a license can be revoked, suspended or not renewed from 10 to six, Grams said. These are basically the same grounds

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listed under state law, he said.

“They’re no-brainers,” Grams said, and include making a false statement on a license application, interfering with police, violating health and building codes, and violating restrictions imposed under the plan of operation, security plan and any license stipulations with the city.

Because of the number of changes made to the proposed law, the Common Council was not to vote on the ordinance Wednesday but instead to review it. Aldermen will vote on the measure Tuesday, March 5.