

Port council approves ordinance changes that tighten rules for applicants

With little discussion Tuesday, the Port Washington Common Council approved revisions to its liquor license law.

Although the measure was initially met with resistance from current license holders, officials tweaked the law to ease some of their concerns while still strengthening the ordinance.

City Administrator Mark Grams said Tuesday that he had not heard any comments from license holders since amending the proposed ordinance.

Ald. Dan Becker lauded the city staff for working with current license holders to address their issues with the new ordinance, saying that was an important step.

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

For example, new liquor license applicants must 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 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.

New license holders are 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.

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

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