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CITY OF MILWAUKEE  
LICENSES COMMITTEE HEARING

In the Matter of:  
WOLSKI'S TAVERN  
1836 North Pulaski Street

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ALD. JAMES WITKOWIAK - Chairman  
ALD. JAMES BOHL, JR. - Vice Chairman  
ALD. JOSEPH A. DUDZIK  
ALD. ROBERT PUENTE  
ALD. WILLIE WADE

ALDERMAN MICHAEL D'AMATO - 3rd District  
QUARLES & BRADY, by JOHN ROTHSTEIN, 411 East  
Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, appeared on  
behalf of the Applicant.

Proceedings had and testimony given in the  
above-entitled matter before the UTILITIES &  
LICENSING COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE on the  
May 31st, 2005, before Terese M. Schiebenes of  
Milwaukee Reporters Associated, Inc.

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PROCEEDINGS

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(All City Personnel were previously affirmed.)

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CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: In the 3rd District, Dennis Bondar, agent for Octopus, LTD, Class B Tavern renewal application for Wolski's Tavern at 1836 North Pulaski Street.

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MR. ROTHSTEIN: Good afternoon. My name is John Rothstein, and I'm with Quarles & Brady, and I have the privilege of representing the people at Wolski's, and they are here today. Mr. Dennis Bondar is at the end of the table here to my right, and his brother is Bernie Bondar to his left and then Mike Bondar. They're all owners and all operators of Wolski's.

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(Whereupon DENNIS BONDAR, BERNARD BONDAR, and MICHAEL BONDAR were duly affirmed.)

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CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: Names and addresses for the record, please.

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DENNIS BONDAR: My name is Dennis Bondar, I live at 3428 North Downer Avenue.

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BERNARD BONDAR: Bernard Bondar, I live at 1845 North Pulaski, which is directly across from the tavern.

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MICHAEL BONDAR: My name is Michael Bondar,

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1 I live at 3314 North Hackett Avenue.

2 CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: Thank you. Let the  
3 record show that Alderman Michael D'Amato appears in  
4 this matter, also. Do you admit to receiving a notice  
5 in the mail there's a possibility your application  
6 could be denied because of neighborhood objections to  
7 loitering, littering, loud music, noise, damage to  
8 private property, vandalism, public urination,  
9 trespassing, criminal activity, parking and traffic  
10 problems, disorderly patrons, and conduct which is  
11 detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the  
12 neighborhood?

13 MR. ROTHSTEIN: Yes. That notice was sent  
14 out last week.

15 CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: Thank you.  
16 Neighborhood Services?

17 NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES: No objection.

18 CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: Health Department?

19 HEALTH DEPARTMENT: Health has no objection.

20 CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: Go ahead.

21 MR. ROTHSTEIN: Thank you, Alderman  
22 Witkowiak. Again, it's John Rothstein, and we're here  
23 on an application renewal. I was here this morning,  
24 and we all had the pleasure of watching the committee  
25 work, and fortunately I think this is one of the more

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1 happy occasions that you have.

2 Wolski's, I believe, is one of the more  
3 reputable and really a piece of Milwaukee history. I  
4 say that not lightly because just last month -- we're  
5 all interested in Visitor Bureau and more business for  
6 the city -- in the Chicago Tribune, Wolski's was  
7 featured as a place to go in Milwaukee to see a part  
8 of Milwaukee's history.

9 The three Bondar gentlemen before you are  
10 the great grandchildren of the original creators of  
11 Wolski's on Pulaski, and they are very pleased to be  
12 here. They're all here, and there are over 48 people  
13 in the audience here to speak in favor of Wolski's.

14 This is a real neighborhood bar, a real  
15 success story that I think you'd want to point to as  
16 the type of operation that you would want to tell  
17 their own stories. The reason that they're here in  
18 such strength is that this is really a new thing for  
19 Wolski's. They have never received a notice like  
20 this. Typically their application is just put in,  
21 they sign it, and they send it out. But they received  
22 last week the notice that, alderman, you mentioned,  
23 and they had no experience in that, they've never had  
24 any sort of problem like that.

25 These men have operated the bar as a family

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1 bar for over 30 years now, and their practice is that  
2 they always want one of the family members at the  
3 tavern because it's their tavern, and they take real  
4 care. And if you know the Pulaski Street area, it's  
5 very small, very quaint, and they take it as their  
6 own. They do the snow shoveling there, not the city.  
7 I heard this morning a real big issue here for much of  
8 the city and a lot of taverns is parking, so these  
9 gentlemen have taken it upon themselves to purchase  
10 property and create parking space in the area, some of  
11 the largest parking area of all the institutions in  
12 this area. It's a very nice area.

13 In any case, because there was one  
14 complaint, when we received this letter, we  
15 immediately went into action to find out what is this.  
16 They take this very seriously. This is their  
17 livelihood, and they have a tradition. Fortunately, I  
18 see it wasn't operating after hours or young people  
19 being in the facility or bar fights or people outside.  
20 Actually, what it was was two blocks away there was  
21 some litter, and apparently there was a sign Wolski's,  
22 it might have been a bumper sticker, but that was it,  
23 and that's what created this. So we all came just to  
24 let the committee know what sort of people run  
25 Wolski's and the support that it has in the community,

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1 and they're very important in that.

2 That was the only complaint that was on  
3 file, and even that was hearsay. It was strictly  
4 somebody reported that there was some broken glass  
5 about two blocks away. And if you know this area,  
6 it's a very well-established area, older section of  
7 town, and within, oh, three blocks, there's more than  
8 five taverns established, all good, solid  
9 establishments. So there's no claim that they know  
10 that these people came from Wolski's, that wouldn't  
11 even be the closest bar.

12 But they wanted to come to the committee  
13 today to let them know that whatever, if there's any  
14 complaint, if there's any issue, they're always there  
15 to try to take care of it. That's the kind of men  
16 these are. So we, of course, think that there is no  
17 issue in terms of this committee's action. This is a  
18 happy occasion, I believe.

19 The only thing I would bring up is that a  
20 lot of these people came today because apparently  
21 quite a few notices were sent out. This was brand new  
22 for Wolski's and some of the bars. Over 600 notices  
23 were sent out to neighbors soliciting complaints.  
24 Unfortunately, that just didn't happen. That's not  
25 Wolski's tradition. That was kind of unusual, and

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1 they didn't understand why so many notices were being  
2 sent out.

3           The only other thing was in the only written  
4 complaint that there was about this broken glass is  
5 that that person who reported it, she heard that from  
6 another person, she didn't actually even see the  
7 glass. She reported that maybe she thought it had to  
8 do with the overlay district, and that's simply a  
9 zoning issue, but it's somewhat more difficult, or are  
10 there additional guidelines in that area, and some  
11 people feel there's unfairness to that in that maybe  
12 Wolski's was singled out because it's supported the  
13 neighbors in that regard.

14           In any case, back to what this committee has  
15 to do. We are here today to see if there's anybody to  
16 testify against Wolski's. There are in the audience  
17 today, if the committee would like to hear, there are  
18 neighbors directly across the street, there are people  
19 who have lived their entire life there, there's a  
20 retired police lieutenant who is prepared to testify,  
21 there's a member of the Milwaukee County labor area  
22 that is prepared to testify, et cetera.

23           So that's what you have today, and we leave  
24 it in your good hands. Thank you.

25           CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: Thank you. I just want

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1 to say to everybody here, first of all, thank you for  
2 your patience in waiting for so long. If you haven't  
3 had the opportunity to watch this committee work  
4 before, this is a very hard-working committee, and we  
5 try our best to get everybody their say and not waste  
6 any time, but today was an occasion -- and you can  
7 never tell with these hearings if you're going to have  
8 a roomful of people or three people, so it's hard to  
9 get the scheduling, so we appreciate everybody's  
10 patience.

11 And I just want to say, as Mr. Rothstein has  
12 said, there's possibly some other things on everyone's  
13 mind here today, but we have to stick to the issue why  
14 we're here today, which is simply the renewal of this  
15 license. So if anybody else had any opinions on  
16 anything else having to do with the overlay district  
17 or whatever, we can't really hear that at this time.  
18 It's not part of the notice, and it's not part of what  
19 this committee is about.

20 DENNIS BONDAR: Excuse me, sir, but the  
21 overlay was mentioned in the complaint.

22 CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: Okay. I want to see a  
23 show of hands here, how many people are here to  
24 testify on this matter? Can I see a show of hands?  
25 Now I'd like to see how much people are here to



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1 testify in opposition to the renewal of this license.  
2 Anyone here to testify in opposition of this license,  
3 I'd like to see a show of hands. Let the record show  
4 that no one has acknowledged that question.

5 ALDERMAN BOHL: Mr. Chairman, I can tell you  
6 that I have never been to Wolski's, so I can say I  
7 never have closed Wolski's. In fact, my long-held  
8 assumption that Wolski's was some quiet place on the  
9 near south side, that when I walked into the Grand  
10 Avenue Mall and saw the bars that made Milwaukee  
11 famous, this was just one of the ones that was  
12 plastered on that tee shirt. Unbeknownst to me, it's  
13 a near east side establishment. I've been on this  
14 committee for five years, five-plus years, spent some  
15 time chairing it, never had the pleasure of having you  
16 gentlemen before us, and I wish ideally that we could  
17 say that for every establishment here in the city.

18 That being said, I think that every one of  
19 these persons here would tell all committee members  
20 many fine things, but we have a very long agenda here  
21 today, so we would just say that many of them have  
22 closed Wolski's and have been good neighbors when  
23 they've left. I don't know that we need to belabor  
24 the point any. I would move approval at this time.

25 (Applause.)

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1                   CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: And let the record show  
2 in case the cameras didn't pan the whole audience,  
3 there's 50 or 60 or 70 or maybe 100 people here in  
4 support of Wolski's. And again, we thank you for your  
5 time and your patience for coming out. The motion by  
6 Alderman Bohl --

7                   ALDERMAN PUENTE: Mr. Chair.

8                   CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: Alderman Puente.

9                   ALDERMAN PUENTE: I'd like to give Alderman  
10 D'Amato a chance to speak on this issue, if he would  
11 like to.

12                   CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: Alderman D'Amato, go  
13 ahead.

14                   ALDERMAN D'AMATO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
15 I had met with Mr. Bernie Bondar on Friday and told  
16 him that we had received one complaint that we sent to  
17 the License Division, and as you know, when we receive  
18 a neighborhood complaint, we do schedule places that  
19 are up for normal renewal. We received three  
20 complaints in which people asked their names be  
21 withheld. They were from various areas around the bar  
22 within a couple blocks, and we did receive one police  
23 complaint about a car leaving the tavern at closing  
24 time in which the person ran into a house at 1818  
25 North Pulaski Street, and that person was cited for

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1 drunk driving. So there were some concerns.

2 I've been representing this area for nine  
3 years, have not had complaints about Wolski's. The  
4 occasional complaint I think early on about closing  
5 time, but the gentlemen have always been responsible  
6 in making sure that the neighbors are taken care of.  
7 There are signs on their establishment asking that  
8 neighbors be respectable to the neighborhood, and we  
9 would just ask that they continue to do that in this  
10 area, and the neighbors would appreciate it.

11 CHAIRMAN WITKOWIAK: The motion by Alderman  
12 Bohl is to recommend approval despite items contained  
13 in the notice. Are there any objections to that  
14 motion? Hearing none, so ordered.

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