



# City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
53202

## Meeting Minutes - Final ALCOHOL BEVERAGE LICENSING TASK FORCE

*JUSTICE LOUIS BUTLER, CHAIR*

*Joel Brennan, Sallie Ferguson, Rebecca Grill, Edward J. Lump, Comptroller Wally Morics,  
Sharon Nowak, Bruce Schrimpf, Chet Ulickey*

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Friday, October 10, 2008

10:00 AM

Room 301-A, City Hall

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### 1. Roll Call

*Meeting commenced at 10:04 a.m.*

*Members present: Butler, Nowak, Ferguson, Brennan, Lump, Barron, Schrimpf and Ulickey*

### 2. Introduction of Members

*Members introduced themselves.*

### 3. Presentation by Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr.

*Common Council president Willie Hines, Jr. present. Pres. Hines, Jr. is co-sponsor of the resolution creating the task force. He talked about the special circumstances surrounding Alcohol Beverage licensing and the need for recommendations for an improved licensing system.*

### 4. Presentation by City Attorney Grant Langley

*City Attorney Grant Langley at the table. He mentioned that the City Attorney defends actions of the Common Council in court, as well as advises the Common Council and the Licenses Committee.*

*Suggestions:*

*-The task force should consider whether or not there should be changes in the process, such as, is it appropriate for the Licenses Committee to deal with these matters. Analyze whether the License Committee is able to adequately address the suggested changes.*

*-Examine the line between appropriate input of Common Council members and the perception of aldermanic influence. Also, how to best allow members of the Common Council to provide appropriate input while dispelling the perception of Aldermanic influence.*

*-Encourage behind the scenes input from neighborhood groups. In order to make the process transparent, look at the behind the scenes activity and make the public know of the this activity; a record of contact between licensees and Council Members*

*should be made.*

*Question:*

*Ed Lump asked, "How should the record be maintained of behind the scenes contact? Mr. Langley said it should be the responsibility of the Council Member and the applicant to put behind the scenes contact on record. This will make it a more transparent process.*

**5. Presentation by Deputy City Clerk Jim Owczarski**

*Deputy Jim Owczarski present.*

*Presented information regarding the open records/meetings provisions for the Common Council. He mentioned Chapter 19 of the state statutes regulating open records and meetings.*

*Mr. Owczarski advised that no meetings are to be conducted through e-mail and that there should be no discussion of the meetings via e-mail that is cc'd to all members.*

**6. Presentation by License Division Manager Rebecca Grill**

*Rebecca Grill, task force member. Ms. Grill passed out a packet of information titled "Alcohol Beverage Licensing" and a sample agenda from a Special Licensing Committee meeting dated February 5, 2008.*

*Ms. Grill went through the Alcohol Beverage Licensing packet page by page, presenting information including scheduling guidelines, notices to neighbors, and types of appearances before the committee.*

*In Chapter 90, there are guidelines regarding what merits a warning letter as opposed to an appearance at the Licenses Committee.*

*Ms. Grill discussed the permits and licenses (Special Party Permits and Temporary Extensions) that are granted or denied by the Council Members without input from the Licenses Committee.*

*Mr. Brennan asked about the number of alcohol beverage licenses that are applied for each year. Ms. Grill said that she can probably get a breakdown of how many of the 20,000 licenses that are applied for each year in the License Division are Alcohol Beverage licenses.*

*Asst. City Attorney Bruce Schrimpf pointed out that at times a Council Member will recommend denial or granting of a license, and the Licenses Committee will make a recommendation in opposition to the Council Member's recommendation.*

*Chair Butler asked about the percentage of decisions of the Council that follow the committee's recommendation when the Council Member recommends denial as opposed to when the Council Member recommends granting.*

*Richard Withers from the Legislative Reference Bureau present. Mr. Withers presented information from the LRB that indicates that 79% of committee decisions supported the recommendations of the Council Member.*

*Mr. Lump wanted to know if statistics can be obtained regarding recommendations and*

*decisions about Alcohol Beverage licenses only.*

*Mr. Withers said that LRB can do an analysis of actions of the Council vs. actions of the committee when there are aldermanic recommendations.*

**7. General discussion of the purpose, responsibilities and goals of the Task Force**

*Chair Butler said that understanding the process is beneficial to working toward making recommendations about the process.*

*Alderman James Bohl, Chairman of the Licenses Committee, at the table. He said he wants to appear at a meeting in the future in order to give some viewpoints from the perspective of the Licenses Committee. Ald. Bohl also said that there is a lot more opportunity for abuse with a new license application as opposed to a renewal application.*

*He opened the invitation to Task Force members to attend a License Committee meeting to view the process.*

*Sgt. Chet Ulickey said that most applicants usually know what will be presented to the committee. He said he welcomes calls from the public and licensees regarding the police report attached to an application.*

*Ms. Grill said she believes one of the goals should be a focus on where problems have occurred in the past regarding the license process.*

*Mr. Schrimpf said he keeps in mind during the Licenses Committee meetings what would and would not be defensible in court. He has found that the process has held up to legal standards. The process by which the committee arrives at its recommendation is what concerns the city attorney's office. Mr. Schrimpf said he thinks there should be a focus on making the process the best it can be.*

*Ms. Grill added that there should be a focus on the role of aldermanic discretion with regards to how things get scheduled before the committee.*

*Mr. Brennan said there should be a goal of more transparency in the licensing process and more opportunities for the public to see the process.*

*Chair Butler added that there should be emphasis on how things work and where they can be improved but not solely from the focus of the problem that occurred with Ald. McGee, Jr. He said that hearing from representatives from the organizations like the Tavern League, Great Lakes Beverage Association and the Wisconsin Restaurant Association is very valuable.*

**8. Set next meeting's agenda**

*-Presentation of Information regarding what goes on in other cities in the state regarding Alcohol Beverage licensing*

*-Appearance/Presentation by Ald. Bohl*

*-Data/statistics regarding Alderman vs council decision*

*-Mr. Richard Withers would present information regarding territorial days vs. present.*

*-Talking about different ways of obtaining detailed information regarding the license process*

*-Discussion of three or four different "case studies"/examples of court decisions regarding Alcohol Beverage licensing*

**9. Set next meeting date(s)**

*The task force members proposed various future dates.*

*Meeting adjourned 11:51 a.m.*

*Acting Staff Assistant Tobie Black*