

ENTERTAINMENT

Allure wants to lower its age of entry to 21, but faces opposition from alderman, neighbor



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Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published 5:03 a.m. CT March 4, 2025

The owner of Allure near Cathedral Square wants to change an age restriction on the bar's liquor license to allow people ages 21 to 24 into the bar, but he is facing opposition from an alderman based on neighbor complaints.

Allure, 789 N. Jackson St., opened in 2021, and its license was approved with a provision that patrons must be age 25 and older. It's the only bar on the block in the popular night life district that has such a provision.

"There have been issues here, and I am concerned about changing the 25-and-older age range," Ald. Robert Bauman, who represents the area, said in a Common Council Licenses Committee meeting on Feb. 19.

Some committee members didn't understand why it was the only bar on the block with such a provision.

"Without any other 25-year restricted businesses nearby, I'm not following the reason for an objection on it," Ald. Peter Burgelis said.

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Allure owner Tino Bates proposed adding the 25-and-older provision when his license was first considered before opening in 2021. He did so in order to gain approval after Bauman had initially opposed the license.

Now Bates wants it changed in order to widen his customer pool as his business struggles.

"We did agree to that because at that particular time we were trying to cater to a 25-and-older crowd," Bates said at the committee meeting. "I've been in the industry six years. It's probably the toughest time that I've experienced in this industry, so we were just looking to stay afloat."

Allure celebrated as Black-owned business in Cathedral Square

Allure's business licenses, which include licenses for liquor, food, entertainment and outdoor seating, were first recommended for approval in a Licenses Committee meeting in 2021.

In that same meeting, Bates' other bar, Truth Lounge at 1111 King Drive, received a 10-day suspension due to police breaking up two fights outside of the bar and for violating COVID capacity restrictions. Truth Lounge also received a \$5,000 fine for being over capacity in 2019.

Bauman had opposed granting Allure its licenses in 2021 due to the issues at Truth Lounge, while committee members were in favor as long as there was a provision to keep capacity down.

Bates agreed to the capacity provision, along with an age restriction that the bar would only be open to those age 25 and older. Bauman then said he would support the license with both provisions, and it was approved by the committee.

Ald. Milele Coggs, who chaired the committee at the time, commended Bates for opening a Black-owned business in the Cathedral Square area, and for working toward buying the building the bar is in.

"I will say how much we're missing diversity downtown and how few establishments of color that there are. ... I am hopeful that you not only keep your other establishment good and improve upon it, but you also do well on Jefferson Street as well," Coggs said. "There are not a lot of people of color who own buildings downtown, so that is huge, as well."

One police report tied to Allure reviewed in 2024

After three-and-a-half years of business, Bauman said Allure has "a history," which was why he was not in favor of changing the age restriction.

"Over the last couple of years there have been complaints about the establishment. The owner pushed back on the complaints, primarily coming from Taylor's next door, and other bars on the street," Bauman said. "Review the records and you will not see the volume of police reports or neighborhood complaints about the other establishments. Had there been, we'd be talking about these restrictions with them, too."

A review of Licenses Committee meetings in the last four years showed that Allure did not have as many neighbor complaints or police reports as Room Seven, 780 N. Jefferson St., across the street.

Allure also has never received disciplinary action from the committee. Allure's neighbor, Taylor's, was the most recent bar on the 700 block of North Jefferson Street to receive disciplinary action when the Licenses Committee issued a warning letter with the bar's license renewal in 2021.

Bates has had to appear in front of the Licenses Committee for Allure's licenses

renewal once since the bar opened in 2021. Hearings are required for license renewals when the city has received multiple complaints from neighbors or police reports related to the bar in the last year.

Allure's 2024 renewal information packet included one police report and two emailed complaints.

The police report was from an incident in December 2023.

The report said police were dispatched to the area after receiving a call about a fight. Upon arrival, Taylor's staff flagged down police and pointed out a man who had been involved in a fight.

Police reviewed security footage and found that Allure security had escorted the man and his girlfriend out of the bar. The video showed that security spoke with the couple for two minutes, then the couple walked out of the frame and the security staff returned to Allure.

Police interviewed Bates who said that the couple had been fighting inside the bar, so they were escorted out per protocol.

A police report synopsis that was presented at the Licenses Committee meeting said that the couple continued to fight outside and a security guard from a neighboring bar got involved, was struck several times, and restrained the man until police arrived.

Neighbor complaints contribute to continued age restrictions

One email complaint in the 2024 license renewal packet was a conversation between Bauman and a redacted source that spanned six months.

"We have a new Italian restaurant in Safinas that just opened, a new restaurant that's supposed to be opening in the Louise's spot, Electric Lime opening in the old Mikey's location, and my owner (redacted) is supposed to put 4-5 million dollars into the Flannerys space. My fear is that none of that will happen as long as allure is on the street," a redacted email from June 18, 2023, said.

The owners of Taylor's, 795 N. Jefferson St., announced plans in 2023 to [remodel the former Flannery's space into a downtown People's Park](#), similar to their Waukesha restaurant. Co-owner James Taylor [told the Journal Sentinel in September 2024](#) that the plans for the downtown space were in a "state of flux."

"We had designed a second story to put on the entire building with greenhouses on top, and the bid came back at \$5 million for the second floor. I took a step back for that reason," Taylor said at the time.

The 2023 email from the redacted source said the night prior was "the final straw," alleging that Allure patrons had been involved in a shooting near the corner of North Jefferson and East Mason streets. No police reports tie Allure to an incident that night.

Police call records show they did respond to 425 E. Mason St., which is at that intersection, for a report of battery just before midnight that night.

Bauman responded to the redacted email saying that the neighbor can enter video evidence, and "we will have to establish that the victims and shooters were connected to Allure."

"I was reluctant to support this license, but considerable pressure was brought and there was no neighborhood opposition," Bauman went on to say in the email.

The redacted source responded saying there wasn't any opposition because "we were told that the license wasn't going to go through because of truth lounge history."

The redacted email said they would start to call police and document everything that was happening.

Emailed complaints from the redacted source continued on July 4, 2023.

"One more thing I wanted to bring your attention about Allure is the music they play. I was told when they first opened up that when they applied for their license they said that they would not be playing rap or hip hop. Well, that's all they play and usually have their front door open and spills out onto our patio," the email said.

Bauman responded that "music genre is a sensitive issue."

"We need eye witness testimony regarding violence, disorder, guns and excessive noise and police reports," Bauman's email said.

The redacted source emailed again on Jan. 10, 2024, alleging that Room Seven had been "hit with gunshots" and complaining about a man the source claimed was selling beer and shots out of a cooler outside of Allure.

"I feel that the area we have been in for 29 years is going down the tube. (Redacted) my partner (redacted) will not put 5 million into the old Flannery's spot because of what's happening in the neighborhood," the email said. "Also, want to attend your fundraiser but we never got an invite. If you're able to extend an invite to us we would happily attend."

Bauman responded that he could not fundraise "on this site."

The other email complaint against Allure in 2024 was from Phyllis Resop of Pentagon Property Management, which manages the Room Seven building. Resop alleged that patrons of Allure were related to the shots fired incident in January 2024 that caused damage to the building.

A police report from that incident said that security footage showed shots were fired towards Room Seven from a car that had pulled up on North Jefferson Street. Police believed Room Seven was not the intended target of the gunshots. The police report did not mention Allure.

The two email complaints were included in an information packet about Allure's license renewal in 2024, but they were not read into the record during its Licenses Committee hearing, which is standard. The committee often gives more consideration to police reports and public testimony given during the hearing, which are read into the official record.

At Allure's license hearing on Feb. 13, 2024, no one showed up in opposition, while three people testified in support of Allure.

"As the written record will reflect, my office has gotten a lot of email comments about this establishment and issues that the writers of those emails feel exist," Bauman said during the 2024 meeting. "Today there are no witnesses in opposition, the police report is not particularly strong in suggesting problems, and security seems to have done their job."

Bauman recommended approval without a warning letter or other discipline.

License hearings for other Cathedral Square bars

There are eight liquor licenses on the 700 block of N. Jefferson St. Since 2021, only Allure, Room Seven and Taylor's have had licenses hearings.

Room Seven had a hearing was in 2024, which included two police reports (including the January 2024 incident) and three email complaints. The bar received no disciplinary action.

Taylor's had a hearing in 2021 due to an incident where police were called because of a fight. The police report said that upon arrival, the owner appeared to be drunk, surveillance cameras were not working, and patrons inside the bar had been served after 2:30 a.m.

During the hearing, James Taylor admitted he had been drinking. He said the surveillance cameras had been fixed shortly after the incident. He also said that patrons were inside the bar to give witness testimony to police for the fight, and he did not believe anyone had been served alcohol after hours.

Taylor's licenses were renewed with a warning letter.

Allure's license held for next Licenses Committee meeting

Bates, Allure's owner, did not want to comment about the latest licenses committee hearing.

Taylor did not respond to a request for comment.

The request for change to Allure's age restriction was held to the call of the chair and can be heard at the next Licenses Committee meeting on March 6. The committee recommended that Bauman and Bates discuss the change outside of the committee meeting first.