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COMMITTEE ON ZONING

November 22, 2017

Dear President Gershbein,

On November 8th, I secured City Council approval for a set of ordinances that create a “Tavern License Moratorium” across the Streeterville neighborhood. The moratorium only applies to tavern licenses (bars and nightclubs) and does not prohibit the issuance of “incidental liquor licenses” that are required to open new restaurants.

Although the ordinances are approved by City Council, according to Section 4-60-021 of Municipal Code, the moratorium will not take effect until six months after its passage. It is also important to note that any tavern license application filed in Streeterville prior to November 8, 2017 will not be affected by the moratorium.

I sponsored the tavern moratorium ordinances after a series of discussions with the Chicago Police Department and local neighborhood leaders about the increase in quality-of-life complaints related to liquor establishments operating as taverns and nightclubs. Based on my experience with this issue, I decided to take a similar approach in Streeterville as I did in River North.

The “Tavern Moratorium” was carefully crafted by placing a moratorium on only two blocks of frontage at a time. I used this approach because, if a moratorium zone is removed, it cannot be re-imposed for one full calendar year. As such, there are now dozens of two-block moratorium zones that, in aggregate, blanket Streeterville. Any two-block moratorium zone can be dissolved to accommodate a new tavern license if we simply introduce an ordinance to repeal the zone.

This approach allows me to lift the moratorium on two blocks to accommodate a potential new proposal, without lifting the moratorium for the entire neighborhood.

Many think the local alderman decides who does, or does not, receive liquor licenses. This is not the case. In fact, it is the City’s Liquor Commissioner who makes those decisions. Aldermen and police commanders can certainly object to new licenses, but the Liquor Commissioner decides whether to issue them.


In most cases, liquor license applicants take time to visit with the local police commander and the alderman to review their proposals and discuss potential issues or concerns regarding their operations. Unfortunately there is a growing trend of applicants completely circumventing Commander Bauer and myself – instead filing their liquor applications directly with the Liquor Commissioner.

The new “Tavern Moratorium” will prevent those interested in opening a tavern or nightclub in the neighborhood from circumventing Commander Bauer or my office to apply for a new license directly with the Liquor Commission.

I am a strong supporter of downtown Chicago’s Hospitality Industry, but I believe this initiative is a helpful and necessary tool to protect the quality-of-life for my Streeterville constituents. This moratorium will bring greater transparency to the liquor licensing process and will ensure Commander Bauer, impacted neighbors and my office can review future tavern proposals before applications are filed.

I hope you find this update useful. If you have any additional questions about this initiative or require assistance with another matter, please do not hesitate to call my office at (312) 642-4242 or email us at: office@ward42chicago.com.

Sincerely,



Brendan Reilly
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Alderman, 42nd Ward