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ALDERMAN — 42ND WARD

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF CHICAGO

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BUDGET AND GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS
(VICE-CHAIRMAN)

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

COMMITTEES, RULES AND ETHICS

FINANCE

TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WAY

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND AUDIT

COMMITTEE ON ZONING

Dear Neighbor,

I have been informed “Firewater Saloon” held an informational “Community Meeting” at Pinstripes on Monday, July 24th. Please know that Firewater Saloon neither invited me to participate in this event, nor did they inform my office that the event had even been scheduled. I did learn that representatives from Firewater Saloon shared a great deal of misinformation about process and their interactions with my office. I would like to provide you with some clarity.

When Firewater Saloon first contacted my office in May of 2017 (not October, 2016 as they indicated), their representatives expressed their intent to apply for an “Incidental-Consumption on Premise Liquor License” (Restaurant License) to operate as a “Restaurant.” They also informed me they intended to secure a “Public Place of Amusement License” to offer live music.

At that time, I informed Firewater Saloon that 403 East Illinois Street was not a suitable location for an establishment focused on a heavy menu of alcoholic beverages, several dozen beers on tap and a regular program of live music performances. I explained that those activities were not compatible with such a densely populated, primarily residential neighborhood. In fact, I reminded them that the previous restaurant tenant in that space generated literally hundreds of calls for service to the Police and 911. That tenant was also to be a “family-friendly” restaurant.

After I shared my concerns about the location, Firewater Saloon chose to move forward with the liquor licensing process anyway. In fact, despite Firewater Saloon’s earlier assurances to me (and their landlord) that they were only interested in securing licenses to operate a restaurant – they proceeded, instead, to apply for a “Tavern License” – which would allow them to operate as a “saloon” or “nightclub” that derives a majority of revenue from the sale of alcohol, rather than the “family-friendly restaurant” they initially promised to their landlord (and to you).

Earlier this month, the City Department of Buildings had to issue a “Stop Work Order” to “Firewater Saloon” at 403 East Illinois Street, after they were caught conducting illegal interior construction without valid city permits. Misleading landlords and neighbors about the types of liquor licenses they would pursue and engaging in illegal construction without permits is not the hallmark of a responsible operator or good neighbor, it’s the sign of an irresponsible business.

It is important to note that, once an operator has secured a Tavern License, there is nothing to prevent that owner from selling the liquor license or changing the business plan. What could, today, be a “Country Western Saloon” – could easily be converted into a Nightclub with Celebrity DJ’s, \$500 bottles of vodka, laser-light shows and live entertainment tomorrow. Once these liquor licenses are issued, they’re hard to revoke. Revocation proceedings often take 12 to 18 months – and usually the business owner is allowed to operate throughout that process.

Although the official license objection deadline is July 25th, I am asking you and your neighbors to address letters of objection to Liquor Commissioner Trotter, but email the letters to my office, so that we can deliver them on your behalf. If you have already submitted a letter, thank you.

Please encourage your concerned friends and neighbors to do the same, it can make a big difference in the outcome of this liquor license application process.

Please address your letters to:

Shannon Trotter
Local Liquor Control Commissioner
121 N. LaSalle Street
City Hall, Room 800
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Please e-mail a copy of your objection letter to my office at: Objections@ward42chicago.com so that we may add it to our file of evidence. We will forward a copy of your letter directly to Liquor Commissioner Trotter, to ensure she receives & reviews it in a timely manner. We are asking you and your neighbors to **submit all remaining objection letters to my office by August 1st.**

As we receive copies of letters of objection, they are added to a binder that I will offer as evidence during the upcoming liquor application review. These letters are important, as they can serve as evidence of residential concerns, should this application be appealed in the future.

It is not often that I feel compelled to proactively oppose a pending liquor license application. In fact, I have only opposed a handful of such applications during my 10 years serving as your alderman. But it is my primary responsibility to guard my constituents' interests and I believe this establishment will have a significant deleterious impact on the Streeterville neighborhood.

It is my pleasure to serve as your representative on the City Council. Please contact my office if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Brendan Reilly
Alderman, 42nd Ward

cc: Debby Gershbein, SOAR