

Meeting Minutes

City of Melrose, Massachusetts

Organization: Melrose Local Liquor Licensing Commission

Meeting Date: Thursday, September 28, 2023

Meeting Location: Cassidy Conference Room
City Hall
562 Main Street
Melrose, MA 02176

Attendees: Joseph Nevin, Chairman
Michael V. Iudice, Commissioner
Kevin Cronin, Commissioner
Lauren Grymek, Clerk to the Liquor Commission

9:30am Meeting Called to Order by Chairman Nevin

I. New Business

1. One-Day Special Permit Applications submitted to local licensing authority:
 - a. Idle Hands Craft Ales LLC - Sunday October 1, 2023, Temporary Beer Garden, Beebe Estate, 235 West Foster Street, Melrose MA 02176
 - Application and accompanying documents reviewed.
 - Comments
 - Christopher Tkach, Founder & President, Idle Hands Craft Ales spoke as the applicant to answer questions about the event, and noted there was a successful event on 7/9/23.
 - Commissioners asked about turnout, checking ids and reviewed the event map with the applicant.
 - Commissioner Iudice inquired about attendance at the July event and Mr. Tkach indicated about 600 attendees. He also said they increased the number of porta potties to 3.
 - Tom Champoux, 87 Crescent Avenue, resident organizing the event with Idle Hands, offered comments about wanting to bring the community together, working with local mobile food vendors LaQchara and Kindred Crepes, and a BBQ food truck to have food available for purchase; Ped Bike committee would once again offer free bike valet, and there would be live music by local musicians.
 - Commissioner Iudice made a motion to approve the One-day License application for Idle Hands.
 - Commissioner Cronin seconded the motion.

- The motion was unanimously passed.
- b. Working Man Distillers, LLC – October 21, 2023, Noboundary Fighting, Melrose Memorial Hall, 590 Main Street, Melrose, MA 02176
 - Application and accompanying documents reviewed.
 - Comments:
 - Commissioner Iudice indicated this annual event has occurred for several years in Melrose without any issues.
 - No further discussion.
 - Commissioner Iudice made a motion to approve the One-day License application for Idle Hands.
 - Commissioner Cronin seconded the motion.
 - The motion was unanimously passed.

II. Update on Revised Zoning Ordinance to create provisions for Brewery Use

- Comments
- James O’Loughlin, 39 Lincoln Street, read a letter regarding pending/upcoming regulations created by the liquor licensing commission for brewery use. See attached.
- Mayor Paul Brodeur information about the zoning ordinance presented by the Planning Board and passed by the City Council which allows for brewery use in certain areas of Melrose.
- Additional information on the zoning ordinance is available and linked here:
https://melrosecityma.igmm2.com/Citizens/Detail_Meeting.aspx?ID=6335
- Now that the brewery use is established for zoning purposes, the LLC will need to draft, review, consider and adopt regulations to issue licenses under MGL Ch 138 Section 19C. Public process will be part of this.
- Commissioner Iudice made a motion to close public comment on this order of business.
- Commissioner Cronin seconded the motion.
- The motion was unanimously passed.

10:15am

Motion to Adjourn

- Commissioner Iudice made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
- Commissioner Cronin seconded the motion.
- The motion was unanimously passed.
- Meeting adjourned.

WCDV

REGULATIONS FOR BREWERY USE
SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the pending regulations for brewery use. I'd like to briefly discuss two topics:

First, I'd like to understand the public process. In particular, will draft regulations be promulgated for public comment well in advance of any meetings to finalize? Also, will the meetings be advertised and at what time will they be held?

Second, I spoke to the Appropriations Committee on this topic on September 11. I'm providing a copy of those remarks for the record. To summarize:

- I don't object to the concept of locally brewing and selling beer for on-site consumption – I agree that it could bring some new vibrancy to Melrose.
- But I do think the food requirement, and other appropriate regulations, need to be an important part of framing that. And to be clear, by food requirement, I mean the current regulation for restaurants that requires food to be ordered prior to the second drink.
- The food requirement is important for two reasons. Physically, food slows the absorption of alcohol. But more importantly, the food requirement sends a message and reinforces a behavior at the point of on-site consumption, that drinking alcohol as part of something else is more acceptable and less potentially harmful, than drinking alcohol as an activity unto itself.

On September 11, I went on to discuss some social consequences, which I won't repeat now. But it is important that brewery use be framed appropriately, including the food requirement. Without that type of framing, a brewery could be no different than a tavern. We don't want a place where people come simply to drink.

In my remarks, I had asked the City Council to hold approval of zoning on this until draft regulations were available. While they didn't go that far, in a full council meeting on September 16, two councilors and the mayor discussed the food requirement, and two others discussed social consequences or expectations for regulation.

If brewery capability were going into the Rising Eagle under our existing restaurant regulations, I would have fewer concerns. But I do get very concerned when we enable alcohol-centric activities. The food requirement will be important in broadening the scope of the brewery experience in Melrose.

I'd ask that you give serious consideration to my comments, and feel free to give me a call if you would like to discuss.

JAMES O'LOUGHLIN
39 LINCOLN ST, MELROSE, MA 02176
(617) 279-3436

I appreciate the opportunity to speak briefly about Order 2024-4 – Zoning for Brewery Use.

I don't object to the concept of locally brewing and selling beer for on-site consumption – I agree that it could bring some new vibrancy to Melrose.

But I do think the food requirement, and other appropriate regulations, need to be an important part of framing that. And to be clear, by food requirement, I mean the current regulation for restaurants that requires food to be ordered prior to the second drink.

The food requirement is important for two reasons. Physically, food slows the absorption of alcohol. But more importantly, the food requirement sends a message and reinforces a behavior at the point of on-site consumption, that drinking alcohol as part of something else is more acceptable and less potentially harmful, than drinking alcohol as an activity unto itself.

And let's set aside the glamorization that comes with alcohol promotion – without appropriate framing including the food requirement, a brewery can be no different than a tavern.

We have a city government that takes great pride in supporting organizations that combat domestic violence. At a high level, I've seen statistics that alcohol is a factor in 1/2 to 2/3 of all domestic violence incidents. While we may discuss the precision of the statistics, I would hope that we could agree on the accuracy of the general conclusion – and be aware of the devastating impact. Beyond domestic violence, we know that there are many other issues associated with alcohol abuse. It's a little ironic that tonight I saw signs on the City Hall lawn promoting "National Recovery Month" – which addresses both drug and alcohol addiction. Many people handle alcohol responsibly; but we need to remember that many others struggle. It is important that brewery use be framed appropriately.

During the first Appropriations Meeting on this subject and then at the August 14th public hearing, several of you discussed or acknowledged social consequences associated with alcohol abuse. I appreciate that. During the public hearing, one of the City Councilors asked if the food requirement would apply. The August 28th letter from the Planning Board addresses several questions from the City Council, but not that question.

At this point, I do not think brewery use has been sufficiently defined for the City Council, the elected body, to approve it. We're not talking about a technical detail like the alcohol content of beer. We're talking about community values and fostering socially responsible behavior. This is a matter for the City Council, the elected body. I ask that you hold this in Council until the Liquor Commission has drafted regulations that more specifically define the use, prior to your making a decision regarding the appropriateness of zoning for the use.