

Liquor License Commission Meeting Minutes

Day, Date and Time: Monday, July 7th at 5 pm
Place of Meeting: City Hall Auditorium, 62 Friend St.

1. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Derek at 5:10pm
2. Roll Call – Present were, John Kirton, Derek Balaam, and Russ Saboo of the Liquor License Commission.
Also present was Victoria Feger, staff liaison.

3. Minutes for Approval
Motion by Derek to approve the minutes from June 9
John seconded
3-0, *The motion passed unanimously.*

Motion by Derek to approve the minutes from July 1
Russ seconded
3-0, *The motion passed unanimously.*

4. Public Comment –

Camille Sanders of 79 Elm Street came to speak in advance of the continued hearing for the license applicant, Mill 77. She had the following comments and concerns:

- Since the previously held meeting, Ms. Sanders found out that Silvaticus and Barewolf did not both have full liquor licenses, but Barewolf has a beer and wine license for their own products, they also are in a building where there is a lot going on and there is a café there as well. They also have a huge parking lot in front. Silvaticus does have a full alcohol license, but they are surrounded by business, with a public parking lot directly across the street with on street parking right next to their facility where food trucks regularly park. There is also Crave which is across the street with Water Street Café, where if people want food, it is accessible for them.
- Ms. Sanders says the problem with 77 Elm street has always been the parking. Originally that building came with seven spaces, and she stated that it was two [building] owners ago that purchased the residential lot on Fruit Place and turned it into a parking lot. She said this makes sense to be viable for the building's occupants. However, it also in a residential neighborhood, with single and multifamily apartment homes.
- She stated if we were talking about a beer and wine license, fine, but when you are asking for an all inclusive license, for beverages that contain much higher alcohol content, she believes that's when it becomes a bar, not a brewery. She stated that she spoke with Craig after the last meeting and by his description, this would be more like a 'pub'. She said she looked up the definition of the word pub, and that is an establishment which would also serve food. She continued that Mill

- 77 has the ability to become a bar, and where the parking lot is in a residential neighborhood safety is a concern; being intoxicated, using the many stairs to get to/from the parking lot, and the whole atmosphere changes around that.
- She also stated that it's unfortunate that the people on Fruit Place were not included on the [abutters] notice because many of them would have come, she thinks many of them are interested in this. She believes that notices should have gone to all the abutters of the deed of the property, including the parking lot
 - Ms. Sanders ended by stating that she would hate to see the complexion of the residential neighborhood to be diminished. She thinks Mill 77 as it currently is has been great addition to the neighborhood and the owners have worked hard to create a nice atmosphere and they've done everything they can to tell them where to park and people are just lazy. She thanked everyone for the opportunity to comment and be part of this process.

5. Continued Hearing for an application for a new license

Forrest Hill Brewing Company, LLC, DBA Mill 77 is a brewery located at 77 Elm Street. They applied for a new Section 12 All Alcohol license, which was presented to the commission members for review and discussion on July 1, 2025. After some discussion, the hearing was continued to today's meeting. The applicant currently holds a Farmer's Series Pouring Permit, which this commission approved and granted. The applicants were present and available to answer any questions.

- Derek asked about the need for a kitchen where an establishment can serve food if they hold a section 12 all alcohol license. Russ spoke about how there is not a requirement to have a kitchen or to serve food for a section 12 licensee. Russ has spoken with the ABCC and the applicant to confirm that they meet the requirements for the license with not serving food from an in-house kitchen. Russ believes the establishment has done their due diligence in preparing for and getting answers to these types of questions before applying and has no issues with this license application.
- Derek asked if there was anything else for Craig Penno, of Mill 77, to address. Craig replied that he felt that he spoke to the concerns presented at the last meeting and in subsequent conversation with the abutter, so he didn't have anything else to share.
- Derek spoke to Ms. Sanders to thank her for her public comments and to say he understand the concerns she brought forth. He indicated that they had the same concerns with other applicants previously, mentioning both Cider Hill and Market Square Bakehouse, but haven't had issues once the licenses were issued and he thinks part of that is because these hearings allow for comments and concerns to be brought up ahead of time, so the establishments can be proactive about mitigating issues.

Russ motioned to approve the application for this license

Derek seconded the motion

3-0 The motion to approve this application passed unanimously.

- After the vote, Russ addressed Ms. Sanders, stating he also understands and appreciates her concerns. The biggest thing being parking, both he and Craig spoke of directing patrons to places to park including the Costello Center, or the Water Street parking lot. Mill 77 is working with you to keep patrons off the private parking and no parking areas. Russ mentioned that the LLC can't speak to enforcement of parking that's on the building owners/tenants and police. Russ and the commission haven't witnessed any issues with parking or trash etc. as Ms. Sanders described in both hearing dates. Russ has asked if there's ways to work with either the city or the building for better signage.
- Craig answered to clarify where the parking is, that the lot is private parking for the building. They try to direct people to the municipal lot. They have spoken about wanting Clarks street to be partially two way so they can direct to their private parking better because it can get very confusing for people coming down Elm Street who see they have passed Mill 77 and then have to navigate through downtown and around to Fruit Place to access their building's lot.
- Derek asked if the spots are marked for Mill 77 specifically, the answer was no, and Ms. Sander's parking lot has a gated entrance so they haven't had any continued issues with parking on their property from Mill 77's patrons.
- Ms. Sanders agreed that Fruit Place could use some directional signage because that's an easy corner to miss if you're not familiar with the area.
- Derek stated he voted for this because the owners of Mill 77 are responsible business owners and they are not going to be mixing drinks. He affirmed to Ms. Sanders that her concerns are valid and he didn't want to minimize anything, but based on the hearing, the past business practice and the responses to Ms. Sanders' concerns he felt Mill 77 was doing all they needed to for this to be approved.
- Craig spoke about the landscape of brewing and how to keep people keep the business in town. He's happy to see the building having more tenants and they are excited for what is to come.

6. One-day Licenses

- Victoria provided a pricing comparison for one-day liquor license issued by neighboring cities and towns. The comparison included: Amesbury, Newburyport, Salisbury, Newbury, Haverhill, West Newbury, Rowley, Andover, North Andover and Ipswich. Of the communities reviewed, Amesbury's fee (\$25) for one-day licenses are the second lowest (Rowley's is \$10) and Amesbury and Salisbury are

the only communities which do not collect a fee for non-profit one-day licenses. The range of fees (excluding 'no fee') was \$10-\$125, with an average of \$65 and a median of \$50. The commission reviewed and discussed the possibility of changing the price for one-day licenses.

- Derek suggested we consider \$50 for wine/malt and \$0 for All-alcohol, and there was consensus from the other commission members. The group agreed that any changes should be for the next calendar year, beginning January 1, 2026. This is in line with the ABCC's renewal cycle for annual licenses, and gives time to both make and communicate the change.
- Russ recalls being able to amend the pricing at a commission meeting with a vote, Victoria will research to see if it needs to go through council or if there is any other step that would need to be followed to make this change.

7. Board Vote

- Derek asked if we could make a vote for a chair to rotate the position. Russ and John were in agreement of this request.

Russ motioned to name Derek as chair of the commission

John seconded the motion

3-0 The motion to name Derek as chair of the commission passed unanimously.

8. Adjournment

- The commission did not set a firm date for the next meeting but all agreed to reconvene in September. Victoria will select a date from the City Hall Auditorium's availability. Derek asked that an agenda item for the next meeting be to go over renewals for the 2026 annual licenses.

Derek motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:54 pm

John seconded the motion to adjourn

3-0 The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Feger, Executive Assistant to the Mayor

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Approved on: September 2, 2025