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CLERK OF THE BOARD

**MEETING MINUTES**

A meeting of the Salem Licensing Board was held on Monday, January 11, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., via ZOOM, an online video conference call system. Present on call were: Acting Chair, Deb Greel and member Gary Santos, Jr., Clerk of the Board, Melissa Pagliaro and City Solicitor Elizabeth Rennard. Absent was Chairman Gary Barrett and Special Investigator to the Board, Sgt. Erik Manninen.

1. Transfer of an Annual All Alcohol License at 94 Lafayette St. Applicant: MP Restaurant and Bar Corp. for license currently held by SKF Hospitality Group, Inc. d/b/a Stella's Restaurant & Wine Bar. Continued from previous meeting on December 14, 2020.

Ms. Rennard informed the Board that Clerk Pagliaro had spoken to the applicant and they are trying to secure a loan that may require a Pledge. She recommends another continuance until the January 25<sup>th</sup> meeting so they can figure out how they are proceeding. Mr. Santos motioned to continue. Ms. Greel seconded. Vote was confirmed by a roll call vote, 2-0.

2. Discussion with the owners of a Lodging House at 10 Howard St., Reza Mojtabai.

Ms. Rennard said that the owners of the Lodging House are present and several neighbors are as well. Ms. Rennard said they would hear from the owners and then neighbors could raise hands to be heard. Linda Zimmer said she is present with her husband Reza Mojtabai and they would like to hear the issues and address them. Ms. Rennard said that Chief King gave her police calls for the last several months. She said there have been numerous calls to the property with everything from domestic disturbances, fights, disputes to assaults. She said the most recent call was on 1/7/2021. She said they don't know exactly who initiated calls. Abutters were allowed to speak. Kathleen Walsh said she lives at 5 Howard St. She said the property is a constant problem in the neighborhood. She said they constantly witness drug deals, fights and disturbances. She said that there are constant issues. She said she finds it threatening and she thinks other neighbors feel the same. She said something needs to be done. Paul Murray then spoke. He said he lives at 7 Howard St. #2. He said he has lived there for four years and there has always been issues. He said he tried working with Christin Madore and CIU Officer Rocheville. He said initially it seemed a bit better but not for long and since this past summer it has only gotten worse. He said there are new issues but that most of this has been ongoing the whole four years. He said there is a new visitor to the address that almost always creates a disturbance and that some for the residents sit on their wall and drink and throw nips and butts all over their property and talk loudly and yell. He said on Saturday he picked up over 60 empty nip bottles. He said he was happy to hear the Board renews these licenses every year so that he could address these issues. He said he thinks things need to improve things before the license for 2021 is renewed. Ms. Rennard said that this was only on the Agenda for the discussion and that how it normally works is that the Board and neighbors, through the Board, would work with the owners to try and resolve the issues first. Ms. Greel said this appears to be a long time, ongoing issue and it seems to be affecting quality of life for some neighbors. She said she agrees that it sounds like some things will need to be resolved before they renew the license. Marisa Bono said she also lived at 7 Howard St. She said she is new

and just purchased her unit in September. She said she has had to call Salem PD two or three times in the last few months. She said there is a woman who screams uncontrollably, sometimes at 6am, sometimes at 2 in the morning. She said another resident has a dog and never picks up the dog mess. She said what Mr. Murray said regarding the butts and empty nips also. Another resident, Beverly, said she lived at 8 Howard St. She said her property directly overlooks the property. She said from the yelling she knows a homeless woman visits a resident of 10 Howard named Harry. She said the screaming is horrible and the police are called and say that she is an invited guest so they can't do anything. She said there are absolutely no management people at that property. Mr. Murray said that he just wanted to add that when the woman visits, the already bad situation with other issues is just made worse but that she is not the only problem there. Tim Walsh, 5 Howard St. said he was on a call but his wife spoke earlier. He said none of this is new issues in the last four years, other than the screaming women. He said it is constant police, fire and ambulances and there is never a reprieve from the owners. He said there are OD issues, trash issues, etc and that it is a complete nuisance situation. He said they operate in complete disregard of Lodging House regulations. Linda Zimmer said that years ago there was a meeting and that neighbors were told if there were any issues or problems, they could call them directly to address at any time. She said this issue with the woman has been a long hard process. She said the man was CORI'd in order to move in, once he was in this woman began to come around. She said shortly after the issues began, she started the process to get the man out. She said COVID closed the courts and she literally just got them out on January 7th. She said in the meant time she had a no trespass order issued for the female in October. She said she can't just throw people out because of housing laws and COVID made the situation longer and harder to deal with. She said if she had pictures or video of the bottles and others drinking and smoking and talking on others property, she's sure housing court would hear. She said they CORI everyone and try their hardest to invite in good tenants. She said she can't discriminate either. She said the man she had evicted actually came to her through the City and the City was paying his rent. She said they were aware of an OD over the summer of a guest of one tenant. She said they are not aware of drug issues or a dog on the property. Ms. Greel said it was not up to the neighbors to provide her with information that it is up to them to manage their property. She said she is not sympathetic. She said it is very rough when you don't have peace and quiet in your own home. Ms. Zimmer said that as soon as they are aware of an issue, they address it. She said the issue with this woman was out of her control and they did go to court but the delay wasn't her fault. Ms. Greel said they could choose to be there one time a day to check in, one time a week, etc. or could have someone there all the time to check in or to manage the property. Ms. Zimmer said if someone has mental issues and they are dealing with the issue what else can they do? Mr. Santos said the Board will review the police logs to review the issues that precede the most recent problem. He said that should really consider and on-site manager for the property or make themselves more present at the property. Conrad Prosnewski, council liaison, spoke and said that before retiring from the Police Dept. in July of 2019 he knew of the constant issue at this location. He said they were on a list of problem properties in the City. He also said he knows Linda had many meetings with Harry. He said he knows if they were aware, they rented bad people, she would get them out but that it was just one problem person after the next. He said he is compelled to help the neighbors because nothing has changed. He said that the PD has done all that they can. Ms. Greel said it should be taken into consideration how much resource has been taken from the Community Impact on this. Ms. Zimmer said they CORI all the applicants and if they cannot pass a CORI, they do not rent to them. She said if they pass and then they have issues once they move in she cannot discriminate against them. She said then she is breaking the law. Ms. Rennard said that several years ago there were issues like this at a place on Boston St. She said the Board worked with the owners on crafting and enforcing more extensive policies. Ms. Rennard suggest the Board renew the other Lodging house licenses for 2021 and hold off on this one for at least a month until the meeting on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Ms. Rennard said Ms. Pagliaro will schedule a meeting between the Police Dept. and the owners and take all of the neighborhood concerns into consideration. Mr. Murray thanked the Board for listening and

said it was not neighbors' job to inform the owners of the issues at the place they own. Ms. Rennard said there are lots of issues to discuss and that everyone should email Melissa to discuss setting up a ZOOM meeting date.

3. Vote of the Board to renew 2021 licenses in the following categories: Lodging Houses

Mr. Santos motioned to approve the 2021 Lodging House renewals except for 10 Howard St. Ms. Greel seconded. Vote was confirmed by a roll call vote, 2-0.

4. New Business/Old Business: NONE

5. Adjournment: Mr. Santos motioned to adjourn. Ms. Greel seconded. Vote was confirmed by a roll call vote, 2-0.