

**Woburn License Commission
Regular Meeting
Flaherty Auditorium
Woburn Memorial High School
October 22, 2020 – 6 p.m.**

Voting Members participating: Chairman Thomas Skeffington, Commissioner David Gilgun and Commissioner William Pappalardo

Also participating: Mayor Scott Galvin, Woburn Police Capt. John Murphy, liaison to the License Commission; Woburn Fire Lt. Keith Peary, Building Commissioner Thomas Quinn, and Ward 3 Alderman Jeffrey Dillon

Chairman Skeffington convened the regular meeting of the License Commission at 6:08 p.m.

- 1. Mandatory meeting with liquor and innkeepers license holders:** Chairman Skeffington said this is the annual meeting with liquor and innkeepers license holders. He said he wants to thank everyone for attending and he understands how the times are tough for license holders. He said the License Commission tries to be heard and not seen. He said if the economy improves, the License Commission will become more visible. He said Woburn is still in the first phase of the third level of re-opening from the Covid-19 pandemic. He said Gov. Baker has allowed communities to increase to Phase 3, Level 2, but Woburn is maintaining Level 1, due to a recent increase in the number of Covid-19 cases. He said there has been an inquiry about the use of pool tables. He said the use of pool tables and dart boards is currently not allowed in the city of Woburn, despite what the ABCC might have indicated. He said the only exception would be if the pool table is in a separate room. He said if pool tables and dart boards are on the open floor, they cannot be used. He said the License Commission can set its own local rules. He said bars have to be divided from the seating area by Plexiglas and there can be no bar seating if there are no dividers. He said the commission is going to be checking this. He said clubs and restaurants that want to open early on Thanksgiving or Christmas or remain open late on New Year's Eve must apply for extended hours by sending an email to the clerk. He said there must be social distancing. He said there can be no dancing and no music. He said anyone seeking extended hours on a holiday does not have to appear at a meeting of the commission; they will be notified via email. He said Woburn license holders are doing pretty well as a group. He said he thinks only four restaurants in the city have closed due to the pandemic. He said arrangements were made quickly to allow outdoor dining. He said there is no excuse to not obtain a permit for outdoor dining. Mayor Galvin thanked the License Commission for its efforts. He said the clerk has been a great resource and he is polite. He said Capt. Murphy has been a vigilant presence and asked for a round of applause for the Woburn Police Dept. He said the city has a really great police department. He thanked Lt. Peary for his efforts. He thanked Commissioner Quinn for his vigilance. He said he understands the food service industry is difficult right now, and he said he expects it to continue to be difficult for the next 6-7 months. He said Gov. Baker today announced the availability of financial assistance. He said anyone who wants

to inquire about financial assistance can call his office. He said he appreciates what the license holders do for the city. He said Covid cases are going up. He said Woburn is in the red zone. He said Woburn has exceeded 10 cases per 100,000 people which is higher than he wants the rate to be. He said this may be the beginning of a second wave of Coronavirus. He said more testing leads to more positive results. He said the city appreciates everything the license holders do. He thanked the license holders for all they do. He asked if anyone in the audience has questions. Attorney Mark Salvati, 10 Cedar Street, Suite 26, Woburn, MA, said the approval process for outdoor seating was handled phenomenally by the city. He said everyone in the auditorium needs a little help. He asked if there was a consideration for waiving or reducing license fees. He said a \$3,000 renewal fee is not a small amount. He said even a delay on the submission of fees would be helpful. Mayor Galvin said the city of Woburn has an annual budget of \$141 million. He said the city relies on local receipts. He said local receipts are going to be down by \$6 million. He said this is a concern. He said the city will not be able to reduce or waive fees. He said the city's approach would be to help businesses apply for state funding. He said the city is taking a financial hit as well during the pandemic. He said once the city goes down the road of reducing or waiving fees in one realm, it is hard to say no to reducing fees for other permits and services. He said Covid is taking a major toll on the city. He said the offer is there to help licenses holders obtain money from the state. Stephen Gangi of the Woburn Bowladrome, 36 Montvale Avenue, Woburn, MA, said his establishment was shut for 5-6 months. He said even a credit for fees during the time of the closure would be helpful. He said the Bowladrome has been in business for 80 years and is one of the oldest businesses in Woburn. He said the governor has allotted \$50 million to aid small businesses and if everyone who is eligible receives assistance the average payout will be about \$7,500, which he said will be gone by Monday. He said even \$10,000 won't last long. He said the Bowladrome will be filing for state assistance. He said the Bowladrome is open, but they are losing money every day. He said even a delay of the license fee would be helpful. Capt. Murphy said Woburn police are here to help. He said he knows it is tough right now. He said city officials will start visiting license holders the first week of November. He suggested forwarding to the clerk the hours of operation and contact information so the municipal employees will know when to arrive. Capt. Murphy held up warning signs for underage drinking and said two of these signs must be posted in each establishment. He said he has a limited supply of signs, but he will bring them along to inspections. He said every establishment has a different method of checking ID, but the important thing is establishing a reputation for stringent carding. He said if an establishment has video surveillance, please don't erase it. He said once video is erased and re-recorded, it looks worse. He said video helps. He asked license holders to leave their 2021 application forms at the bar, or at the cash register at package stores. He asked them not to mail it to corporate headquarters. He said 20-25 percent of license holders don't leave the application form at the bar. He said license holders are required to submit to inspection. He said he will advise them of liquor laws. He said standing in restaurants is only allowed by permit and must be in the designated standing area. He said the same is true with pool tables. He asked license holders to notify the commission of their hours so the inspectors will know when they are open. John Pacheco of the Portuguese American Recreation Club said their establishment has been closed since March. Capt. Murphy said he is willing to come out at night. He

said he is willing to work with license holders. He said the city wants to get the inspections done efficiently. He said he understands things are different this year. Chairman Skeffington advised license holders that 99.99 percent of college students will be coming home from school at Thanksgiving and are not likely going to return until February, and to be vigilant about checking ID. Commissioner Quinn said his office is going to be more flexible this year, due to the circumstances with Covid-19. He said they are going to be looking at how clean the hoods over the stoves are this year because regular cleaning schedules are less likely. He said he will try to do as many inspections as he can the first week. He said communication is key, especially this year. He said he wishes all the license holders luck. Lt. Peary said he will be also looking at stove hoods, as well as fire alarms and sprinkler systems. He said dirty hoods are often the source of fires, and that is something on which he will be particularly focused. He said if anyone needs to make special arrangements for an inspection to call the Fire Dept.'s headquarters. Chairman Skeffington said the Treasurer/Collector's office has written an advisory regarding the filing of the tax certificate. He said all license holders must be up to date with the payment of taxes and fees. Chairman Skeffington said Alderman Dillon has been a great help to the commission and asked if he has anything to say to the license holders. Alderman Dillon said he knows times have been difficult. He asked the license holders to hang in there. He said the license holders are a part of what makes the community great. Chairman Skeffington asked the license holders to follow the commission's guidelines. He said they are getting a ton of phone calls. He said maybe it's the sign of the times, but everyone wants to tell on everyone else. He said the commissioners are not running around checking on things. He said they will be doing spot checks on their own between now and Christmas. He said anyone who needs help should feel free to call. He said he knows it's been tough but urged the license holders to hang in there.

Motion made by Commissioner Gilgun and seconded by Commissioner Pappalardo to take a 5-minute recess; approved, 3-0. Chairman Skeffington recessed the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Gilgun and seconded by Commissioner Pappalardo to return to the regular order of business; approved, 3-0. Chairman Skeffington reconvened the meeting at 6:37 p.m.

- 2. The Great Mandarin, 168 Cambridge Road, status update:** Representing The Great Mandarin was Tien-eh Lee, 7 Burlwood Lane, Woburn, MA. Mr. Lee said the restaurant is not going to be open until the spring. He said they are going to be closed during the winter and hope to re-open in the spring. Chairman Skeffington said Mr. Lee has the option until November 30 to renew his liquor license. He said if the license is not renewed, he will have to re-apply for a new license. Mr. Lee said he is under the impression he cannot maintain a pocket license. Commissioner Gilgun said if Mr. Lee does not renew his license, someone else can apply for it and if the license is granted Mr. Lee will be out of luck. Chairman Skeffington said if Mr. Lee renews and does not re-open until the spring, the commission will not come after him. He said Mr. Lee has been in business in Woburn for a long time and he has always been transparent with the

commission. Mr. Lee said he does not think winter will be a good time to re-open his restaurant. Motion made by Commissioner Gilgun and seconded by Commissioner Pappalardo to acknowledge the Great Mandarin has advised the commission he may renew his liquor license but may not re-open until the spring, and that the commission will work with him; approved, 3-0.

- 3. Red Roof Inn, 19 Commerce Way, inquiry into incident on March 23, 2020 (continued from meeting of August 20, 2020):** Representing the petitioner were Ketan Patel, Principal, Azad Legacy Partners, 131 Hartwell Ave., Lexington, MA, and Ricky Patel, manager, Red Roof Inn, 19 Commerce Way, Woburn, MA. Chairman Skeffington said he personally wants to thank the Red Roof Inn's representatives for their effort. He said the last report from Capt. Murphy indicates there were only four calls. He said the commission appreciates the type of response it has received from Red Roof Inn. He said the commission will continue to keep its eye on Red Roof Inn, but he does not think they need to return to the commission for status updates on a continuing basis. Commissioner Gilgun said Red Roof Inn has done an incredible job. He said it is obvious they have put effort and money into improving the situation at the hotel. He said he is a fan of Red Roof Inn now. Commissioner Pappalardo said he has only been a member of the commission for a short time but there have always been problems at Red Roof Inn. He said the new owners have done a fantastic job. He said hopefully they will not have to come before the commission again. Ketan Patel said they have established a rapport with Capt. Murphy. He said they are trying to get to zero police calls. He said they are local residents and want to be positive influences in the city. Chairman Skeffington asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the commission about the situation at Red Roof Inn. Alderman Dillon said he is also a member of the City Council's Committee on Public Safety & Licenses, and he has been following the situation at Red Roof Inn. He urged the Red Roof Inn representatives to keep up the good work. He acknowledged the time and effort it has taken to improve the situation at Red Roof Inn. He said it is obvious management wants to make the hotel a place of which Woburn can be proud. He said the City Council is there to support the License Commission. Chairman Skeffington said on his way home tonight, he stopped at a store on Winn Street and had a conversation with a man whose son died due to drug addiction. He said the man has been following what is going on at Red Roof Inn and commented what a good job management is doing there. Chairman Skeffington said it is good to hear that type of input from the community. He asked for a motion to continue to request regular police reports from Capt. Murphy but to no longer require regular appearances by Red Roof Inn at commission meetings. Motion made by Commissioner Gilgun and seconded by Commissioner Pappalardo to suspend regular appearances at commission meetings by Red Roof Inn officials unless they become necessary again; approved, 3-0.
- 4. Approval of minutes from meetings of September 17, 2020:** Motion made by Commissioner Pappalardo and seconded by Commissioner Gilgun to approve the minutes from the aforementioned meeting; approved, 3-0.

5. **Any other matters that may be legally before the Commission:** Chairman Skeffington asked if any license holders did not appear at tonight's mandatory meeting to pick up their renewal forms. Clerk said the following liquor license holders did not appear: Joe's American Bar & Grill, Red Robin, Joseph's Catering and Spicy Bar, Inc. Clerk said Red Robin and Joseph's Catering have indicated they do not intend to renew, and Joe's American is closed. He said Spicy Bar is a new license and he has been having a hard time getting in touch with someone. He said the only innkeeper not to appear was Best Western. Chairman Skeffington asked the clerk to invite Best Western to the November meeting. Chairman Skeffington asked the clerk to invite the license holder of the Dog House to the November meeting. He said there have been two recent incidents involving police. He asked the clerk to invite officials with Extended Stay Deluxe to discuss some similar incidents. He asked the clerk to inquire with Capt. Murphy.

6. **Motion made by Commissioner Gilgun and seconded by Commissioner Pappalardo to adjourn; approved, 3-0.** Chairman Skeffington adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees