

Legislation seeks to ease burdens of liquor license application for restaurants

BY ABBYWOJCIK

Some business owners seeking a liquor license in the City of St. Louis may soon have a clearer path, as provided in a bill introduced in June in the Board of Aldermen with an emphasis on streamlining the application process specifically for restaurants that serve liquor, enhancing public safety provisions and incorporating other changes.

The initial reading of Board Bill 60 on June 9 proposed to eliminate the plat and petition phase of the application process, in which the applicant must obtain verified neighborhood approval signatures before a liquor license hearing is scheduled. However, the bill's primary sponsor, Ward 4 Alderman Bret Narayan, clarified that this legislation is in its very early phases, and committees are looking at alternative tracks for the bill's future. The bill has been referred to the Special Committee on Reducing Red Tape Committee.

"The goal of that particular piece of legislation was to get a lot of feedback from the community about what kind of changes that

they may want to see," Narayan said. "So, I think we're probably looking at some sort of alternative track than what we had initially looked toward in Board Bill 60, but still with the same spirit of easing burdens for restaurateurs who are starting off."

Streamlining the process to obtain a liquor license is one of the main objectives of this legislation, with a goal of helping new restaurants open. One of the alternative solutions presented is the concept of temporary licensing.

"There's a really neat dining scene happening in the city, and we want to make it easy for people to open those kinds of concept restaurants that people tend to enjoy," Narayan said.

As renowned chefs and restaurateurs look to open popups, concept restaurants and other establishments, the goal is to encourage those destinations in the city rather than having them choose to open outside city limits due to the excessive amount of time it takes to obtain a license.

The plat and petition requirement also is a significant burden

to non-English speaking business owners looking to obtain licenses for their restaurants.

"There is a desire [from the community] to also remove that burden for the immigrant population who we're trying to attract to grow the city," Narayan stated.

While there has been feedback about the importance of the plat and petition for community input regarding liquor use in the neighborhood, St. Louis is working to ease this burden for immigrant populations bringing their culture and cuisine to the city by empowering growth and diversity.

"This bill will not make it easier for rowdy nightclubs and problematic package liquor stores to open in the city," Narayan said. "This simply makes it easier for restaurants that are doing that majority of their business in food to get through those first few months that are really hard to make it through as a restaurant."

Problems with some nightclubs and package liquor stores have arisen as well, leading aldermanic committees to discuss solutions



ABBY WOJCIK PHOTO

People enjoy drinks outside Brennan's Bar on Euclid Avenue.

that give Excise Commissioner Myles McDonnell more tools to enforce regulation.

As Board Bill 60 continues to evolve based on community feedback and concerns about liquor use, residents can voice their opinions by going to stlouis-mo.gov and reaching out to their Alderperson. Residents also can sign up to speak at an upcoming bill's committee meeting.

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