

Good Neighbors Report

To: PS&L Committee

From: Attorney Nhu H. Arn

RE: **GRC Sport Lounge, LLC., Reginald Booker, Agent and Owner**

Meeting date: Monday, September 7, 2021

PS&L agenda date: Monday, September 13, 2021

Departments attended: Attorney, Police, Fire Building, Health, and City Development

License requested: Class "B" and "Class B" (beer and liquor)

Topics Discussed:

- Nuisance premises/issues. Based on police records, this bar had been operating as a nuisance premises up until its closure in June of this year. Police issues included lack of crowd control, no licensed operator on premises, failure to cooperate with officers (including refusal to let officers in, refusal to help disperse crowds, failing to assist officers with obtaining video surveillance), and exceeding capacity limits. As a result of these issues, the Racine Police Department declared this to be a chronic nuisance premises earlier this year. After some discussion with RPD, the previous owner (Crystal Zaehler) decided to voluntarily close in June and remains closed today. These issues were brought to Mr. Booker's attention, who was given tips on how to abate the nuisance.
- Health Department issues. Mr. Booker will need to apply for a restaurant license, as well as pay outstanding fees to the HD before any license may be issued to him. In addition to GRC Sport Lounge, Mr. Booker also operates Fresh Off the Hook at 1644 Washington Avenue. The HD has received numerous complaints with respect to illegal dumping of garbage and grease at the premises. Mr. Booker did eventually comply with the HD orders, but he was slow to do so and was charged multiple re-inspection fees as a result, all of which are still outstanding at this time.
- Occupancy limits. Mr. Booker will need to apply for a new occupancy permit from the Building Department. The current occupancy limit is set at 120, rather than 200, as stated in the application. Mr. Booker did state, however, that he partially renovated the premises, so he believes that the final number will be higher. The final number will not be set until the Building Department conducts an inspection and issues an occupancy permit.
- Hours and premises description. The application states that closing hours for GRC Sport Lounge will be midnight during the week and 1:00 a.m. on the weekends. Mr. Booker was informed that if the committee approves the license, he would be bound by those

hours stated on the application and cannot extend them without prior approval from the committee. After conferring with Mr. Booker, the premises description should be amended to state: first floor building and basement storage. If the committee approves the license, it would be with this amendment.

- Disqualification based on criminal convictions. Based on Mr. Booker's multiple felony convictions, he is disqualified from holding a license based on the policy guidelines unless the committee deems that he has been sufficiently rehabilitated. Mr. Booker stated he will submit evidence of rehabilitation (i.e. letters of recommendation, etc.) per the guidelines, prior to the September 13th committee meeting.
- Personal property taxes due. Mr. Booker does currently owe personal property taxes to the city at this time. Per section 6-106 of the ordinance, no alcohol license may be granted to an individual until he or she has paid all personal property taxes assessed against him that are owed to the city.

Overall summary:

Although Mr. Booker is applying as a new applicant, he has been operating GRC Sport Lounge for the past several years as a silent partner. Mr. Booker is in the process of purchasing the premises from the previous owner in order to continue operating GRC Sport Lounge. Based on Mr. Booker's track record of running GRC Sport Lounge, as well as Fresh Off the Hook, staff has some concerns that this will continue to operate as a nuisance premises.