



Licensing Board
CITY OF WATERTOWN
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
149 Main Street
Watertown, Massachusetts 02472
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BOARD MEMBERS

DONNA B. DOUCETTE
SANDRA KASABIAN HOFFMAN
JOHN LABADINI

ALTERNATE MEMBER
JIM TSEKREKAS

MINUTES JUNE 18, 2025

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: May 15, 2025

1. Special Licenses

- Tatoul Badalian, Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry
Walk-a-Thon Approved 2-0
September 13, 2025

Tatoul Badalian appeared in support of the application and explained the route of the walk. This is the 14th annual event for this organization, taking place on the day of Watertown's Faire on the Square. The walk will be over the approximate period of 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and participants will then join the Faire. Acting Chair Kasabian Hoffman reviewed the elements of the application, including the meeting advertisement and the route, which will begin at the Charles Mosesian Cultural & Youth Center and follow Mt. Auburn Street to Saltonstall Park. Mr. Badalian stated that no roads would be closed for the event and all participants will be adults. The Building, Health and Fire Departments and the Zoning Enforcement Officer had no comment on the application. Sgt. Lewis stated that the Police Department had no objection to the granting of the license requested, subject to the conditions in the department's written report. The Board voted to grant the license, subject to the conditions requested by the Police Department.

- Visjna Zarak
Special All Alcohol License Approved 2-0
Commander's Mansion
440 Talcott Avenue
Tipsy Tea Party **June 29, 2025**

Tammy Fernandez-McKenna, events manager in the City's Department of Community Development and Planning, appeared in support of the application. Acting Chair Kasabian Hoffman reviewed the elements of the application: a Tipsy Tea Party pride event; advertising flyer; description of food and beverages; TIPS certifications for alcohol servers; liability insurance; caterer's license; ABCC alcohol transport permit. Visjna Zarak stated this is the second year of the event. There will be food and light refreshments in the Commander's

Mansion, with an event time of 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The expected number of guests is 125, and guests will register in advance of the event. Ms. Fernandez-McKenna noted that age identification wristbands would be given to attendees upon entrance to the event. The Building and Fire Departments and Zoning Enforcement Officer had no comment on the application. The Health Department reported its approval was pending action on a food permit application. Ms. Fernandez-McKenna stated that she would be the crowd manager, and will submit her certification to the City Clerk's office. Sgt. Lewis stated that the Police Department had no objection to the granting of the license requested, subject to the conditions in the department's written report. The Board voted to grant the license, subject to the conditions requested by the Police Department.

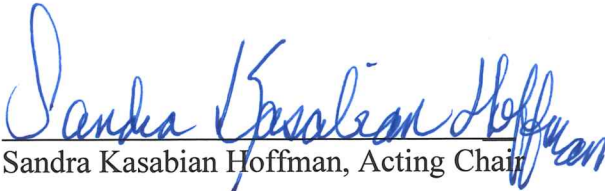
- Visjna Zarak Approved 2-0
Special All Alcohol License
Commander's Mansion
440 Talcott Avenue
160th Anniversary Gala **July 19, 2025**

Visjna Zarak, of Hostess, LLC, appeared in support of the application. Acting Chair Kasabian Hoffman reviewed the elements of the application: advertising flyer; TIPS certifications for alcohol servers; caterer license; bar set-up; ABCC alcohol transport permit. Visjna Zarak explained that holding of the event is dependent on ticket sales; if those do not get to 75 persons, the event will not proceed, and if there are more than 100 attendees the event will be more like that described in the application proposal. If the number is less than 100, there will be a pared back version of the event. Tammy Fernandez-McKenna, events manager in the City's Department of Community Development and Planning, noted that the mansion was commissioned 160 years ago. Visjna Zarak stated she had submitted an application to the Health Department for a food service permit, but had not yet finalized the event menu. There will be food stations if there are over 100 attendees; if the number is less than that, there will be passed food items. Ms. Fernandez-McKenna stated that age identification wristbands will be issued to attendees. The Building and Fire Departments and Zoning Enforcement Officer had no comment on the application. The Health Department reported its approval was pending action on a food permit application. Sgt. Lewis stated that the Police Department had no objection to the granting of the license requested, subject to the conditions in the department's written report. The Board voted to grant the license, subject to the conditions requested by the Police Department.

2. 3D Group, Inc. Approved 2-0
d/b/a Conley's Pub & Grille
164 Belmont Street
Alteration of Premises for
All Alcohol Common Victualer License

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|----|---|-------------|
| 3. | O'Some Café, LLC
d/b/a O'Some
123 Main Street
Common Victualer License | Granted 2-0 |
| 4. | XZH, II, Inc.
d/b/a New Ginza
63 Galen Street
Entertainment License | Granted 2-0 |
| 5. | Lalibela Ethiopian Cuisine LLC
d/b/a Lalibela
5 Spring Street
Transfer of All Alcohol Common Victualer License,
Common Victualer License, 6-Day Entertainment
License, Sunday Entertainment License | Granted 2-0 |

Start: 7:16PM
End: 8:45PM


Sandra Kasabian Hoffman, Acting Chair

Present: Sandra Kasabian Hoffman, Jim Tsekrekas
Also Present: Watertown Police Sergeant Mark Lewis, Assistant City Clerk Emily Martin, Attorney David Doneski

3D Group, Inc.
d/b/a Conley's Pub & Grille
164 Belmont Street
Watertown, MA 02472

The Watertown Licensing Board (with member Kasabian Hoffman and alternate member Tsekrekas present) met to consider the application of 3D Group, Inc. d/b/a Conley's Pub & Grille for approval of an alteration of its premises at 164 Belmont Street, licensed for All Alcohol Common Victualer service, by the addition of outdoor seating.

John DeVito, secretary and a director of the corporation, appeared in support of the application.

Mr. DeVito stated that the proposed outdoor seating will be on the sidewalk in front of the restaurant, six tables of two seats each, based on patron requests. He noted that the restaurant would not be using any of the street area, as had been done in past years. Mr. DeVito presented photographs of the proposed seating area. Board clerk Emily Martin reported that there is a requirement of 42 inches for pedestrian travel on the sidewalk, and Mr. DeVito presented a photograph showing the sidewalk clearance. He added that there will be limited service hours for the outdoor area.

Board member Tsekrekas asked what policy there would be to keep patrons from transferring drinks from the outdoor seating area to other persons. Mr. DeVito stated that the restaurant would be using plastic containers for drinks, and that there would be a host and food runners who would be watching patrons who are entering and exiting the area.

The Building Department and the Zoning Enforcement Officer reported no objection. The Fire and Health Departments had no comment.

Sgt. Lewis stated that the Police Department had no objection to the proposed alteration of premises, provided that the conditions stated below were imposed.

After hearing, the Licensing Board voted unanimously to approve the proposed alteration of premises, subject to the following conditions:

1. The seating for the licensed premises shall now be reflected as 142 seats, with an additional 12 seats to be added for outdoor seating, for a total of 154 seats.
2. All conditions of the license shall remain in place.
3. Use of the outdoor seating area shall be subject to the applicable regulations of the Town of Belmont.

O'Some Cafe, LLC
d/b/a O'Some
18 Robin Road
Reading, MA 01867

The Watertown Licensing Board (with member Kasabian Hoffman and alternate member Tsekrekas present) met to consider the application of O'Some Cafe, LLC d/b/a O'Some for a common victualer license to be exercised at 123 Main Street.

Lei Shen, manager, appeared in support of the application.

Lei Shen stated that the applicant is proposing to take over the license for the library coffee counter operation. The operations plan is to serve sandwiches and normal coffee drinks; and the applicant will also obtain a food permit for preparation of food in the library space. A simple menu will be offered. Acting chair Kasabian Hoffman noted that per the report of the

Health Department a food permit had already been issued. Board clerk Emily Martin reported that the number of seats is 24, not 2, and that there was a typographical error in the hearing notice.

The Building Department, Fire Department and Zoning Enforcement Officer reported no objection to the application. The Health Department reported that a food permit had been issued.

Sgt. Lewis stated that the Police Department had no objection to the granting of the requested license, provided that the conditions stated below were imposed.

After hearing, the Licensing Board voted unanimously to grant a common victualer license, subject to the following conditions:

1. The description of the licensed premises is as follows: approximately 736 square feet; front entrance; no public bathroom; kitchen, and main seating area.
2. The seating capacity shall be limited to 24 persons, as shown on the plan submitted (extract of site plan for Watertown Public Library, detail 3 – “Cafe – Existing & Demolition Plan”).
3. The hours of operation shall be 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday, and 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Sunday.
4. There shall be no alcoholic beverages on the premises.

XZH, II, Inc.
d/b/a New Ginza
63 Galen Street
Watertown, MA 02472

The Watertown Licensing Board (with member Kasabian Hoffman and alternate member Tsekrekas present) met to consider the application of XZH, II, Inc. d/b/a New Ginza for an entertainment license for the premises at 63 Galen Street, licensed for All Alcohol Common Victualer service.

Risheng (Sam) Xu, president, appeared in support of the application together with legal counsel for the applicant.

Counsel for the applicant stated that there were two requests: to extend the operating hours to 1:00 a.m. for Thursday, Friday and Saturday; and to allow karaoke for dining customers, with food provided during dining hours. She stated that there was an existing, nearby venue operating during late night. Board clerk Emily Martin noted that the hearing notice was for an entertainment license only, not an extension of hours of operation. Counsel stated that the hours would be Thursday until 9:30 p.m., and Friday and Saturday to 10:30 p.m. David Doneski, of

City Attorney KP Law, stated that the Board could approve an entertainment license for existing hours of operation, but that approval of more extensive hours would require a separate application to enlarge the hours of operation. Counsel for the applicant stated that the applicant would submit a separate application for extension of hours and that, for the proposed entertainment, a DJ would set up sound equipment on an existing table in the restaurant, which seats 4 to 6 persons.

Anthony Farina, an abutting business owner (Farina's bicycle shop) and owner of property located on the opposite side of the site, a 4-family apartment building on Aldrich Road, commented that he had had nothing but issues with the restaurant and that there was no compliance with state or local laws regarding outdoor dining. He said he had measured the distance from the bedrooms in the apartment building that abuts the restaurant, and they were less than eight feet away. He added that there was no sound insulation in the building, and no sound testing or evaluation had been done, which he said was required per state regulations. Mr. Farina stated that the decibel rating for noise has to decrease at 9:00 p.m., and that raising the level for the period to 1:00 a.m. was unacceptable. He stated his opinion that the restaurant building was hollow, so that he could hear things when walking by it, and that the kitchen door is often open. Mr. Farina said that the owners have shown no responsibility in the past.

Sgt. Lewis stated that the Police Department did not have any noise complaints on file for the restaurant.

Counsel for the applicant stated that the proposed karaoke machine would have a separation distance of 66 feet from the kitchen door. She added that another nearby restaurant, Jana Grill and Bakery, has DJ service on Friday night and that the applicant was not aware of any complaints related to that business. Counsel further stated that karaoke would only be for dining customers, so that it would not lead to additional patron traffic, and that the current request was for karaoke during established hours, not until 1:00 a.m.

Anthony Farina responded that the applicant has not complied with other requirements for the business, including with respect to outdoor dining and flower planter heights. He stated he had to call the Zoning Enforcement Officer, who came to the site, and that there was no follow through by New Ginza. He added that the flower planters are supposed to be brought in each night, but that the applicant has not moved them as required. He said he was concerned about his tenants being only eight feet away from the building. Board member Tsekrekas asked what was the tenant area in question, and Mr. Farina stated a door. Counsel for the applicant stated she had done a distance calculation, and it was 15 feet. She said the restaurant never got notice of violations, and if there is an assertion of a violation the evidence should be presented. She stated that a complaint made at the present hearing was not a basis to deny the karaoke operation, which she said was a separate issue. Board member Tsekrekas commented that he believed a lot of the issues being presented were not within the Board's purview.

Paula Farina Paulus, also an owner of 16 Galen Street and the Aldrich Road property, submitted photographs she described as showing the claimed violations regarding outdoor dining. She stated that the restaurant did not follow the Licensing Board's requirements from the day it opened outdoor dining and that abutters had to complain to the City. Ms. Farina Paulus

said the manager of the restaurant could not be trusted to control entertainment noise. She added that she had made plenty of calls to the Police Department regarding improper parking. She said the pictures she presented were taken last year about a week after the Board's decision on outdoor seating for the restaurant, and that the Board did not enforce what it had approved. She further stated that the abutters should not have the burden of monitoring the site and requesting enforcement, and that they have gotten tired of calling with complaints. Ms. Farina Paulus stated her view that karaoke until 1:00 a.m. was unacceptable, and that she was opposed to it based on noise and more people at the restaurant.

Counsel for the applicant responded the applicant was not aware of complaints, and could work with neighbors to determine if there are any violations so they could be corrected. She stated she understood the concern about volume, and that the applicant was willing to work with its neighbors. She added that COVID 19 had really impacted the restaurant and it was looking to add a service for its customers, and that it was willing to work to make sure noise does not impact the public. Counsel stated the standard was whether the karaoke would impact public health, safety and order. She also noted that customers are told not to park in abutters' parking areas. Ms. Farina Paulus stated that restaurant patrons will walk by her tenants late at night and make noise, and that people at the restaurant are there to drink alcohol and will be loud when they leave the premises. She said that when there is karaoke at other restaurants there is noise, and vomit on the sidewalk.

Michael Farina, also a 16 Galen Street owner and Aldrich Road property owner, stated that he plays in bands and is used to being around music at night, but that this is a residential area so it is different from a usual set-up in a commercial area. He said that patrons will leave the premises and be loud, that people go to such venues to have fun. He added that to say there would be no problem for the neighbors was wrong, whether the hour was 9:30 p.m. or 10:30 p.m., or 1:00 am. He said people would exit singing, and that people would park on Aldrich Road in front of the Farina building, that nobody wants to hear noise after 10:00 p.m., and that there would be more noise if the karaoke operation were allowed.

Board member Tsekrekas asked if there were currently noise complaints about customers exiting the restaurant, and Sgt. Lewis responded, no. Mr. Tsekrekas stated his view that assumptions were being made regarding what would happen at the premises.

Counsel for the applicant stated that people were focusing on the wrong things. She said if a dining customer wanted to sing the customer could do so, but it was not required. She stated the applicant was not proposing a karaoke club; rather, customers will eat at the restaurant and have the option to participate in karaoke. Counsel added that if a neighbor has other complaints, the applicant wants to work with them. She noted that the photograph presented to the Board was taken a year ago, and said the applicant does not have an intention to violate the law.

Paula Farina Paulus asserted that the applicant did not follow the law, that the outdoor barriers were placed at the wrong height intentionally. She asked what the Board's monitoring practices were, and stated it was the same issue with parking. She questioned if there was anyone to enforce the terms of the Board's decisions. Acting chair Kasabian Hoffman stated that parking was not the Board's purview, and that if there is a parking issue the police can be called. Sgt.

Lewis stated that per a check with the Police Department, during the hearing, there had been 10 parking related calls to the department since 2021, two of which listed New Ginza take-out activity as the reason.

The Fire and Health Departments had no comment on the application. The Building Department and Zoning Enforcement Officer reported no objection.

Sgt. Lewis stated that the Police Department had no objection to the granting of the entertainment license, provided that the conditions stated below were imposed.

Anthony Farina requested that the hearing be continued so he could have legal counsel present on his behalf, and stated he had not been given ample time to prepare. Attorney Doneski advised the Board that there was no particular right to an extension of time for legal consultation, and noted that the issue of time to confer with legal counsel was not mentioned previously during the hearing. Clerk Martin stated that the hearing notice was delivered on June 5, 2025.

After hearing, the Licensing Board voted unanimously to grant a 6-day entertainment license (Monday through Saturday), subject to the following conditions:

1. The hours of exercise for the license shall be Thursday, no later than 9:30 p.m.; and Friday and Saturday, no later than 10:30 p.m., with an 8:00 p.m. start time as stated in the application.
2. The number of musicians shall be limited to three, one of which may be a singer.
3. Neither the band nor patrons shall impede access to the entrance or exits of the restaurant.
4. The entertainers shall utilize the area designated on the plan submitted (area circled in yellow and labeled “DJ Station” on plan sheet titled “Proposed Fire Protection Plan”).
5. Music must be kept at a reasonable and unobtrusive level.
6. A full-service menu must be available during hours of entertainment.

Lalibela Ethiopian Cuisine LLC
d/b/a Lalibela
5 Spring Street
Watertown, MA 02472

The Watertown Licensing Board (with member Kasabian Hoffman and alternate member Tsekrekas present) met to consider the application of Lalibela Ethiopian Cuisine LLC d/b/a Lalibela for approval of a transfer to it of the All Alcohol Common Victualer License held by Mo-Ha Holdings, Inc. d/b/a Molana Restaurant & Molana Market for exercise at 5 Spring Street,

and for a Common Victualer License, and for a 6-Day Entertainment License and Sunday Entertainment License at that location.

Ben Tariri, acting as a representative, but not attorney, for the applicant, appeared in support of the application, together with Hailemeleket Mekonnen and Emebet Arku, husband and wife managers of the LLC.

Mr. Tariri stated that Hailemeleket Mekonnen and Emebet Arku had a similar business in Ethiopia, in Addis Ababa, which will remain in operation. Mr. Mekonnen noted that he is TIPS and ServSafe certified, and has CPR certification. Mr. Tariri commented that there are only a few Ethiopian restaurants in the Greater Boston area.

Board member Tsekrekas asked about Mr. Mekonnen's alcohol service experience in the United States, and he replied that he has served at events and gatherings, and had alcohol service experience in Ethiopia. He added that he knows how to check customer identification and observe service of alcohol issues. Mr. Tariri noted that Mr. Mekonnen works in the IT field as a day job. Mr. Mekonnen stated that he will be working full time at the restaurant, and will do all service of alcohol until other servers are trained and qualified. He said he will be on the premises full time, and that his wife is working to obtain TIPS certification, which is expected to be received this week.

Mr. Tariri stated that the premises currently have an entertainment license, and the applicant is looking to continue that aspect of the restaurant. He said that the restaurant will offer traditional or family-type music, with no dancing. He described the operation as a family setting.

Board clerk Emily Martin noted that the application stated the end time for Sunday entertainment as 11:00 a.m., and Mr. Tariri confirmed that should be 11:00 p.m.

The Building and Fire Departments and Zoning Enforcement Officer reported no objection.

The Health Department reported that its approval would be pending completion of the food establishment permit application process.

Sgt. Lewis stated that the Police Department had no objection to approval of the proposed alcohol license transfer and the new common victualer license, provided that the conditions stated in items 1 through 5 below were imposed, and no objection to the entertainment licenses, provided that the conditions stated below for that license were imposed.

After hearing, the Licensing Board voted unanimously to approve the transfer of the All Alcohol Common Victualer License, subject to the following conditions:

1. The description of the licensed premises is as follows: two floors, approximately 1,000 square feet; three rooms; bar; two kitchens; three restrooms; one front entrance/exit; and two rear exits.

2. The hours of operation shall be 6:00 a.m. (common victualer service opening hour; alcohol service subject to statutory limits, G.L. c. 138, §12) to 1:00 a.m. Monday through Saturday, and 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. on Sunday. No alcohol shall be served before 10:00 a.m. on Sunday.
3. Seating shall be for 161 persons, as shown on the plan submitted (sketch plan sheets labeled “First Floor” – showing 76 chairs, and “Second Floor” – showing 85 chairs).
4. The manager, Hailemeleket Mekonnen, and all servers employed by the licensed establishment shall attend and successfully complete an alcohol awareness training program (e.g., TIPS) immediately upon hire or expiration of certification.
5. Copies of all alcohol awareness training certifications shall be maintained by the licensee and reviewable upon request.

The Licensing Board also voted unanimously to grant a Common Victualer License, in accordance with the conditions for the All Alcohol Common Victualer License, and subject to the requirement of a food establishment permit from the Board of Health.

In addition, the Licensing Board voted unanimously to grant a 6-day Entertainment License and Sunday Entertainment License, subject to the following conditions:

1. The number of musicians shall be limited to three, one of which may be a singer.
2. Instruments shall be limited to a piano, string and reed.
3. The space to be used for entertainment shall be limited to the area of the premises shown on the plan submitted (area labeled “Entertainment Area” on the Second Floor sketch plan described above).
4. No dancing shall be allowed.
5. The hours of exercise for the six-day license shall be Monday through Friday, 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m., and Saturday 12:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. The hours for the Sunday license shall be 1:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.
6. A full-service menu and kitchen hours must be maintained when entertainment is offered.