



**MINUTES
LIQUOR COMMISSION - REGULAR SESSION
TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2025, 4:00 PM**

The Liquor Commission convened in regular session at 4:00 p.m. in the Government Center Boardroom. Commissioner Brady called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Lindsey Meister	Commissioner	Present
Dan Brady	Commissioner	Present
Sreenivas Poondru	Commissioner	Present

Staff Advisors

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Leslie Smith-Yocum	City Clerk	Present
George Boyle	Asst. Corporation Counsel	Present
Chris McAllister	Building Official	Present
Paul Williams	Asst. Police Chief	Present

Public Comment

Matthew Schauer registered to provide public comment, but when called, opted to speak at the Public Hearing for Item 5.B.

Consent Agenda

Items listed on the Consent Agenda are approved with one motion; Items pulled from the Consent Agenda for discussion are listed and voted on separately.

Due to an error in the date listed on the agenda, Commissioner Brady carried the approval of the May 13, 2025, minutes to the July 8, 2025, Liquor Commission Meeting.

Item 4.A. Consideration and Action on Approving the Minutes of the April 8, 2025, Regular Liquor Commission Meeting. (Recommended Motion: The proposed Minutes be approved.)

Regular Agenda

All license creations, amendments, or transfers are contingent upon compliance with all building, health, and safety codes.

The following item was presented:

Item 5.A. Public Hearing and Action on an Application from MCO QSR, Inc., d/b/a Froth & Fork, located at 712 S. Eldorado Rd., Requesting Approval of a Change in Ownership and a Change in Classification to add Sunday Sales to create a Class RAPS (Restaurant, All Types of Alcohol, Package, and Sunday Sales) Liquor License. (Recommended Motion: The Public Hearing proceeds to determine whether the Application meets liquor licensure requirements.)

Commissioner Poondru recused himself due to a conflict of interest. He left the room at 4:02 p.m.

Commissioner Brady opened the Public Hearing at 4:02 p.m.

Sree Premesh Gogineni, Manager of MCO QSR, Inc., after being sworn, addressed the Commission. Mr. Gogineni explained that, if approved, the new ownership planned to take over the existing license and did not anticipate a change in day-to-day operations. He noted that he had prior experience with other businesses that sold alcohol in Bloomington and in Virginia.

Commissioner Meister asked if the hours would remain the same and if staff would be BASSET Certified. Mr. Gogineni answered yes.

Asst. Corporation Counsel George Boyle noted that there had been a history of underage sales under the current license and asked if the proposed ownership was aware. Mr. Gogineni stated that he was aware and that they would ensure the same issues would not happen if the license was approved. Mr. Boyle suggested that the staff card everyone who looked anywhere close to the legal drinking age. Mr. Gogineni agreed.

Asst. Police Chief Paul Williams asked if they planned to have any late-night parties or rent out the location for celebrations. Mr. Gogineni answered no.

Commissioner Brady asked if anyone was present in the audience to speak for or against the item. No one came forward.

Commissioner Brady closed the Public Hearing at 4:07 p.m.

Commissioner Meister made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Brady, to positively recommend the Item to Council as presented.

Commissioner Brady directed the clerk to call roll:

AYES: Brady; Meister

ABSTAIN: Poondru

Motion carried.

Commissioner Poondru returned to the meeting at 4:08 p.m.

The following item was presented:

Item 5.B. Public Hearing and Action on an Application from Dixon Entertainment Group, LLC, d/b/a Six Strings Club, located at 525 N. Center St., Requesting Approval of the Creation of a Class TAS (Tavern, All Types of Alcohol, and Sunday Sales) Liquor License. (Recommended Motion: The Public Hearing proceeds to determine whether the Application meets liquor licensure requirements.)

Commissioner Brady opened the Public Hearing at 4:09 p.m.

Brian Dixon, President of Dixon Entertainment Group, LLC, after being sworn, addressed the Commission. Mr. Dixon explained that he had been involved with Six Strings Club for 15 years and served as its general manager for the past 13 years. He noted that the current owner looked to exit the liquor business, and he applied for the license creation because he wanted to continue the venue's legacy and to maintain its core identity while he worked to make strategic improvements. He stated that he aimed to expand the club's hours of operation and create more opportunities for local musicians. He shared his belief that the community lacked stage access for performers in the Bloomington-Normal area. His goal was to enhance stage opportunities through the venue's improved entertainment offerings with high quality live music. He noted that

he planned to make incremental improvements, but would preserve the fundamental character of the establishment that had made it a staple of Downtown entertainment. He explained that instead of purchasing the existing owner's LLC, he chose to form a new business entity and establish a separate asset purchase agreement, which would cover the transfer of the brand, tangible assets, and intangible elements of the existing business. He emphasized that while presented as a creation, the request would essentially be a continuation of the same business, as its core operations and character would be maintained.

Asst. Corporation Counsel George Boyle asked what the change of hours would be. Mr. Dixon explained that he planned to expand from three days (Thursday, Friday, Saturday) to six days a week. He noted that he wanted to add Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday to offer more live entertainment, sports, and additional programming for Downtown patrons. He stated that Sunday hours would be from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Tuesday and Wednesday hours would be from 7 p.m. until 1 a.m. when the bar would close. He clarified that he wanted to broaden Friday and Saturday hours to include happy hours and potential afternoon events to create more opportunities for entertainment and increase the venue's accessibility to the community.

Commissioner Meister asked if anything else would change aside from the hours and an expansion of live entertainment. Mr. Dixon explained that he wanted to maintain the venue's core identity and noted that through informal polling, he had confirmed the community's interest in reviving past entertainment offerings, such as Tuesday night open mic events, which were stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic. He recognized a live entertainment void left by the closure of Night Shop and saw an opportunity to provide a similar community space for local performers and entertainment seekers.

Commissioner Meister praised the business' current approach to security, given their location in the Downtown area, and asked if they had a rooftop area. Mr. Dixon explained that he would like to reopen the venue's rooftop, but faced challenges with the building owners who were hesitant to invest in renovations. He noted that the current lease divided responsibilities, with building owners managing HVAC and exterior maintenance, and his business handling interior and plumbing. He noted that he planned to negotiate potential funding strategies, which included the possibility of funding the rooftop renovation over time. He explained that his goal was to gradually restore the rooftop to operational status to create an additional entertainment space for the venue. He noted that during the most recent building inspection, he had asked about the rooftop space and was provided steps needed to make it useable. By consulting with City officials, he aimed to ensure future improvements were both financially feasible and City compliant.

Commissioner Meister asked if staff would be BASSET Certified and what the capacity of the space was. Mr. Dixon answered yes to BASSET trained staff and stated that the capacity was around 326 downstairs and 49 upstairs. He noted that an inspection had been done the previous year, but that he had not received their new occupancy certificate, so he was unsure about the exact numbers.

Mr. Boyle asked if Mr. Dixon was aware that amusement tax forms would need to be completed. Mr. Dixon stated that he had been unaware until recently, but had got them submitted.

Leslie Yocum, City Clerk, asked for clarification as to whether Mr. Dixon wanted to limit the hours of operation from what was legally allowed, if approved. Mr. Dixon noted that he would ask that there be no limitations and that they be permitted to operate as allowed by Code. Mr. Boyle noted that no condition was recommended.

Commissioner Brady asked if anyone was present in the audience to speak for or against the item.

Matthew Schauer, after being sworn, addressed the Commission. Mr. Schauer explained he was a General Manager at another Downtown establishment and that he wanted to act as a character reference for Brian Dixon. He noted his personal experience, in that Mr. Dixon had given him his first job in the industry 15 years ago and had been a good mentor and role model to him. He praised Mr. Dixon's leadership, guidance, and personal character, and described him as one of the best men he had ever met. He emphasized that Mr. Dixon represented the ideal standard for Downtown bar and restaurant owners and embodied the qualities of integrity, community involvement, and professional excellence. He spoke on behalf of his colleagues, who he shared collectively had over 60 years of Downtown bartending experience, and vouched for Mr. Dixon's character and commitment to legal compliance. He described Mr. Dixon as a vibrant personality, a dedicated family man, and an excellent bartender and manager. He noted that beyond his professional skills, Mr. Dixon was known for his significant charitable work in the community and demonstrated a genuine commitment to giving back. He emphasized Mr. Dixon's understanding of community service and his positive impact on residents and advocated for Mr. Dixon's ownership of Six Strings and hoped the Commission would consider his positive recommendation.

Chris McAllister, Building Official, noted that the occupancy numbers mentioned by Mr. Dixon were accurate and that an occupancy sign would be produced and provided to the establishment so they could post it.

Asst. Police Chief Paul Williams asked that contact information be updated with the Police Department and asked about surveillance noting potential security issues in the line outside the establishment. Mr. Dixon acknowledged the current camera system's inadequacies and noted that reliable coverage was limited to the front door and lobby area. He described the existing equipment as deteriorating and unacceptable, explaining that previous ownership had been unresponsive to his requests for upgrades. He explained that he recognized the critical importance of comprehensive surveillance for both police and insurance purposes and emphasized that having high-quality video equipment was a top priority. He stated that he planned to allocate startup funds to completely overhaul the venue's security camera infrastructure to address these issues. Asst. Police Chief Williams recommended that Mr. Dixon consult him directly to ensure the new camera system worked effectively with the Police Department's existing technology and explained that with compatible equipment, Mr. Dixon could create a more seamless security setup that would help address potential problems efficiently.

Mr. McAllister asked that the KNOX box keys be updated with the fire inspectors. Mr. Dixon noted they would be in contact.

Mr. Boyle asked when the requested change would take place. Mr. Dixon stated his target date was August 1st as the lease start date, but he recognized the need to amend the lease due to the complexities of the licensing process. He planned to close the sale in the last week of July, which would allow for immediate operational continuity. He acknowledged that the lease's original drafting didn't fully account for the lengthy licensing procedures and noted that adjustments would be made to bridge the gap between City Council approval and obtaining the State liquor license. He stated that his intention was to quickly proceed to Springfield to finalize the State licensing once the local approval was secured.

Commissioners and staff had no additional comments.

Commissioner Brady closed the Public Hearing at 4:25 p.m.

Commissioner Meister made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Poondru, to positively recommend the Item to Council as presented.

Commissioner Brady directed the clerk to call roll:

AYES: Brady; Meister; Poondru

Motion carried.

The following item was presented:

Item 5.C. First Appearance on a Citation Issued to ARV Cuisine, LLC, d/b/a Bloom Bawarchi 2.0, located at 503 N. Prospect Rd. Unit 103-104, for Violating Chapter 6, Section 26(a) of the Bloomington City Code Relating to Selling Alcohol to a Minor. (Recommended Motion: N/A.)

Asst. Corporation Counsel George Boyle reported that during compliance checks conducted by Illinois State Police and Bloomington Police in March, the establishment experienced four failures, with one specific sale to an underage individual. He stated that since it was the first violation, the State initially fined the business \$500 and the Liquor Commission negotiated a reduced fine of \$250, which had already been paid. He explained that the establishment admitted to the allegations, and written confirmation was pending, so the matter had been resolved through the admission and payment of the fine.

New Business

No New Business was discussed.

Adjournment

Commissioner Meister made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Poondru, to adjourn the meeting.

AYES: Meister; Brady; Poondru

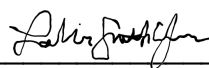
Motion carried (viva voce).

The Meeting Adjourned at 4:28 p.m.

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON



Dan Brady, Commissioner



Leslie Smith-Yocum, City Clerk

