

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Monday, March 20, 2023, at 5:15 pm, (Council Chambers)

Members Present: Lisa Rasmussen, Chad Henke, Doug Diny, Lou Larson, Becky McElhaney

Others Present: Tara Alfonso, Ben Bliven, Jeremy Kopp, Tracy Rieger, Kaitlyn Bernarde, Mary Goede, Katie Rosenberg

Minutes of previous meetings. (02/20/23)

Motion by Diny, second by Henke to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider approval or denial of various license applications

Lisa Rasmussen stated there were two denial recommendations, one of which was referred back to committee from the Council meeting for Abedalrahman Sughayer to submit evidence of rehabilitation. She indicated he did submit the evidence to the Clerk for the Chief to review.

Abed Sughayer respectfully requested the committee reconsider his denial as he was working hard to be a better person. Chief Bliven commented he was somewhat conflicted because battery is an exempt offense for which we usually wouldn't allow evidence of rehabilitation to come into play; however, there were nine letters of recommendation submitted on Abed's behalf, which was pretty persuasive. He stated the recommendation he made was based on policy with the OWI and cocaine convictions in 2018, but it was up to the committee to decide whether to approve or not.

Mary Goede, Deputy Clerk, stated the current running license year was almost over, so if they were to grant this license he'd have to renew by June 30th and the background would be run again. They could choose not to renew if there were any other charges from now until then. Chief Bliven pointed out the non-renewal process is the same as a revocation process requiring a hearing.

Lou Larson commented he believed in second chances, and that they asked Mr. Sughayer to bring the evidence of rehabilitation and he has done that. Doug Diny indicated some of the letters of recommendation were from stellar people in the community so he would support it as well. Chad Hemke indicated he was impressed Mr. Sughayer has shown up to appeal three times before Committee and Council.

Becky McElhaney questioned if we overturn the recommendation, since battery was an exempt offense, would this set a precedent regarding other exempt offenses that come before the committee. Attorney Tara Alfonso explained there was nothing in the Wisconsin Fair Employment Act that says that for an exempt offense you cannot permit a person to show there is rehabilitation. It may be a precedent, but facts and situations are different, so if you do it once it doesn't mean you have to do it every time.

Rasmussen commented in this situation she found the testimonial and the letter from the employer as compelling and there is a decent amount of documentation and even though the non-renewal/revocations process is lengthy, it is not that we have never done it, so the committee has options.

Motion by Larson, second by Diny to approve the Operator's License for Abed Sughayer. Motion carried 5-0.

Katrina Pelletier was not present to appeal her denial recommendation and will remain in the batch.

Rasmussen stated the Wausau River District has a new evening event called Night Market that is requesting that participants be allowed to carry their beer from the 400 Block through the shopping area, which requires a waiver of the ordinance. She noted the Ale Trail events would also require this waiver of open intoxicants on streets.

Blake Opal-Wahoske explained the Ale Trail events would require people to purchase tickets and be wrist-banded and handed a map of which participating businesses have beer samples. The Wausau Night Market is a replacement for Marketplace Thursdays. Individuals would purchase beer at the market on the 400 Block and be wrist banded. There will be a map scattered on sandwich boards throughout the downtown area indicating where they can and cannot go. He stated they would like to use 3rd Street from Washington Street to Grant Street, as well as 4th Street to 2nd Street on either end. Chief Bliven stated he met with Blake and talked through the issues and since it is similar to other events where they have controlled the event space, they felt comfortable with allowing it.

Motion by Diny, second by Larson to approve or deny the license list as recommended and to approve the waiver on prohibition of open intoxicants on streets for the Summer & Holiday Ale Trails and Wausau Night Markets. Motion carried 5-0.

Wausau Fire Department 2022 Annual Report

Deputy Chief Jeremy Kopp commented on this transitional year with adding 12 new firefighters with a pilot program and thanked the community for all the support and the staff for extra hard work. *Report placed on file.*

Operations Report from Fire Department February 2023

Deputy Kopp noted some of the statistics were missing in the report because the Administrative Assistant was on vacation and indicated an updated report will be emailed to the committee. *Report placed on file.*

Tavern Activities Report – February 1, 2023 through February 28, 2023

No discussion. Report placed on file.

Community Outreach Update

Tracy Rieger reported for the month of February 191 housed individuals who are either seeking shelter, incarcerated, or living outdoors; 82% of unhoused did seek and receive shelter while 18% decided to stay outside. The capacity at both shelters was 28 for Salvation Army and 25 for Catholic Charities; for the month of February the Salvation Army did not reach capacity on any one given night and Catholic Charities had 16 days either at or over capacity. The turn away count due to capacity issues or ineligibility for programming at the Salvation Army was a little decreased from last month. She noted she assisted three individuals in February, for a total of approximately 20 individuals, to find housing of which 100% remain house. She relayed a recent success story to the committee. Discussion followed. *For full meeting video on YouTube:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sappouRnrw>

Bob Grady, Director at Open Door, stated the Day Center is up and operating and they are making enhancements and expanding some of the interior programming. He indicated the Day Center has been functioning from 5:00 -11:00 AM, then closed for two hours, and open until 6:00 PM every day during the week. On Saturday and Sunday, they have expanded from 5:00 AM until 2:00 PM. He stated they are putting more procedures in place and went from a tiny galley sized kitchen to a downstairs kitchen area with dining for 21 people comfortably. He noted they have seen 340 unduplicated guests so far this year and approximately 301 stated to be homeless through self-reporting. He stated this statistic captures those that are couch surfing and/or going in and out of transitional places.

He questioned what the committee would like future reports to consist of. Becky McElhaney stated she would like to know how many people go into their programs during the day, connecting to services, etc. Grady gave an example of a Job Center Fair they conducted with a few of the Temp Agencies which resulted in five people added into the workforce. He pointed out they are a low barrier threshold, and it is not required for anyone, and they are very cautious to not duplicate services but may direct a person to a service that is already in place.

Communications

None

Adjourn

Motion by Larson, second by Henke to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:10 pm.