



Baltimore City Live Entertainment Permission for Liquor Licenses

Because of recent confusion regarding the subject of live entertainment, we would like to clarify a few issues for our Baltimore City members.

During the 2008 Maryland General Assembly session, Baltimore City Senators George Della (D-46), Lisa Gladden (D-41) and Nathaniel McFadden (D-45) sponsored legislation that made changes to the liquor laws for Baltimore City. The legislation was introduced at the request of the Baltimore City Board of Liquor License Commissioners and has been signed into law. Among the changes were a new \$500 fee for Class-B liquor licenses with live entertainment and a new \$200 fee for Class-B liquor licenses with outdoor table service.

When the Baltimore City Board of Liquor License Commissioners sent out liquor license renewal notices this year, Class-B licensees with live entertainment were assessed the new \$500 fee. Class-B licensees with outdoor table service were assessed the new \$200 fee. The current law assesses no fee on other classes of liquor licenses with live entertainment or table service.

Baltimore City zoning code currently prohibits live entertainment in zoning districts B-1 and B-2. The Liquor Board may grant live entertainment permission only for those businesses in zoning districts B-3 and higher.

According to the Liquor Board, there should be some documentation in liquor license files or zoning files for businesses that provide live entertainment or outdoor table service. In situations where such documentation does not exist, an application, posting of notice and public hearing will be required for businesses seeking live entertainment or outdoor table service permission, regardless of whether they have historically provided such. For businesses in this situation, the Liquor Board suggests that business owners contact the community association for the neighborhood in which the business is located to help avoid surprise opposition at the public hearing.

While this new fee may appear to be related to live entertainment legislation currently pending before the Baltimore City Council, it is actually a different issue. The bill before the City Council would expand live entertainment in the City by allowing it in those zoning districts where it is currently prohibited. While there has been some controversy surrounding that issue, we have been working very closely with the City Council President's staff to address concerns expressed by our members. The Council President has been extremely receptive to our concerns and we are confident that the final version of this legislation will benefit all stakeholders.

If you have questions about these issues, please call Melvin or Kesa in the RAM office.