

March 10, 2021
9200 Basil Court
Largo, MD 20774
Virtual Hearing

Present:

Daphne Turpin-Forbes, Board Chair
Armando Camacho, Vice Chairman
Tammie Norman, Commissioner
Tammy Sparkman, Commissioner
Terence Sheppard, Director
Jason DeLoach, Esquire, Counsel
Robert Clark, Chief Liquor Inspector
Christian Mendoza, Deputy Chief Liquor Inspector
Johnny Toles, Deputy Chief Liquor Inspector
Patricia Bell, Administrative Manager
Katrice James, Administrative Aide
Keyanna Little, Administrative Aide
Jamie Schaefer, Administrative Aide

Start Time: 7:03 p.m.

Commissioner Forbes: This is an open meeting for the Prince George's County Board of License Commissioners. To ensure compliance with the law (Maryland Open Meetings Act) and our goal of transparency, to please identify yourself when speaking and speak audibly. As a professional courtesy, when not speaking, please mute your device. If someone from the public that is not providing testimony as a witness today, I will recognize you in the hearing and give you an opportunity for your voice to be heard. Everyone's voice matters at the BOLC. We understand that some of you may be passionate about what you have to say and that passion, in this regard, is permissible. What is not permissible is if truth, facts, and respect are not grounded in your voice. Thank you in advance for being truthful, respectful and honest during the entire proceeding.

Director Sheppard: During a typical hearing, there would be an exchange between the Board and the attorneys to exchange information as exhibits. Because this hearing is now virtual, we have implemented a 10-day rule to give those individuals here today, 10-days from today's date to add to the official record. I would ask that you email myself or the administrative staff for the BOLC. You may add information to the record long as it is information that has been discussed in this hearing.

1. Wilson E. Ceron-Jacome, President, Secretary, Treasurer, Lubia A. Ceron, Vice President, Ipala Ceron, Inc., **t/a Rancho Rio Bravo**, Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor, is summonsed to show cause for an alleged violation of R.R No. 10 (2) failure to comply with all State laws and R.R. No. 26 (8)(4) failure to comply with all State laws of the Rules and Regulations for Prince George's County, to wit; That on or about Saturday, August 15, 2020 at approximately 11:27 p.m., Inspectors Bowden and Brockington of the Prince George's County Board of License Commissioners conducted an inspection at the

licensed premises located at 2031-C University Blvd., Hyattsville, MD. Inspectors Bowden and Brockington observed a DJ playing music at the front of the establishment. Having entertainment was not permitted under the County Executive's Order at that time. The manager Ana Soca was notified on the scene.

Commissioner Forbes asks clients if they have representation and reminds them of their right to an attorney. Both clients agree to move forward without representation.

Lubia Ceron is sworn in. **Lubia Ceron** is then sworn in as a translator for Wilson Ceron-Jacome. **Wilson Ceron-Jacome** is sworn in. **Inspectors Jaqueline Bowden and Jeffrey Brockington** are sworn in.

Inspector Brockington: On Saturday August 15, 2020 at approximately 11:27 p.m. inspectors Bowden and Brockington entered t/a Rancho Rio Bravo for a routine Special Entertainment Inspection. We could hear music from the parking lot outside of the establishment. There was a DJ observed playing music. We then asked to speak to the manager, Ms. Ana Soca. Ms. Soca was made aware that the establishment was in violation of RR No. 26B and having ignored the letter from the director of the Board, stating that entertainment was prohibited. The licensee was told that they were found in violation of the state. We instructed them to cease entertainment and they immediately ceased the entertainment. The manager stated that she was unaware of the restrictions. Inspectors Bowden and Brockington left the establishment at approximately 11:35 p.m. All members of Rancho Rio Bravo were cooperative with the inspection team.

Lubia Ceron: So, what he said is true. We did have music playing that evening. We always have music playing; however, we don't consider him a DJ because he is employed as our bus boy. I'm the one that usually plays the music. What we do is play remixes, so I wouldn't consider that a DJ because he is my bus boy. Like my manager had said, we were not aware of the current governor's order at that time prohibiting entertainment. I received a call stating that an extra \$500 would be added to my fine as a late fee due to not having paid the original fine of \$1,500. The reason why I had not paid it was due to not having received the letter/fee in the mail. They (the BOLC) told me that they were going to investigate, but they never contacted me further. The second time they (the BOLC) got back to me, they told me that I had to pay \$2,000. So, I'm not sure what to do. Yes, it is true that we were playing music. We always play music, but he (the bus boy) is not a DJ and I do play music. After the incident, we have stopped playing music.

Commissioner Forbes: Just because you don't call the individual playing music a DJ, it is still a DJ. That requires a Special Entertainment Permit. That is different from having music piped into the establishment. I would like to remind you that upon signing up, you took upon sole responsibility for all violations in the establishment.

Lubia Ceron: We do have a Special Entertainment Permit.

Director Sheppard: Yes.

Commissioner Forbes: So, this is entirely about the crowd of people under entertainment during Covid-19. The violation is of the executive order. I encourage you to revisit the rules and regulations, especially the special rules regarding Covid within the county as well as the state. We would like to thank you for cooperating with our inspectors, that means a lot.

Lubia Ceron: Is there a way to lower the fine? We have not been able to stay open throughout Covid-19 and would really appreciate the help.

Commissioner Camacho: I move to find the licensee t/a Rancho Rio Bravo in violation as charged for a fine of \$1,500 over 3 installments of \$500 over 3 months, seconded by **Commissioner Norman.**

Patty Bell: They were originally sent an offer letter offering the \$1,500 payment as a compromise and the fine was not paid nor was a hearing requested. There is now a \$500 late fee.

Commissioner Forbes: So now, you still owe the late fee, but the \$1,500 can still be made in 3 installments.

Lubia Ceron: So, \$2,000 total?

Commissioner Forbes: Yes.

After Board Vote, the motion to fine the licensee \$1,500 with a \$500 late fee to t/a Rancho Rio Bravo carries.

2. Edward H. Lee, President, Secretary, Treasurer, EJ Development Incorporated, t/a **Mid Atlantic Seafood Restaurant**, Class BL+, Beer, Wine and Liquor, is summonsed to show cause for an alleged violation of R.R. No. 37 of the Rules and Regulations for Prince George's County, to wit; That on or about Monday, December 21, 2020 at 2:30 p.m., Inspector Joseph Tredway of the Prince George's County Board of License Commissioners entered the Mid Atlantic Seafood Restaurant located at 13718 Baltimore Avenue. Laurel, MD to conduct a routine inspection. Inspector Tredway noticed that the licensee was in the process of making alterations to the licensed premises without first obtaining permission from the Board. After gathering evidence and confirming that the licensee had not obtained permission from the Board for the alterations, a violation was issued on January 21, 2021. Commissioner Forbes reminds the licensee of his right to an attorney. The licensee agrees to move forward without representation. Licensee, **Edward Lee**, swears in. **Inspector Treadway** of the BOLC swears in.
Inspector Treadway: On Monday December 21, 2020, at about 2:30 p.m., I arrived at t/a MidAtlantic Seafood Restaurant to complete a routine inspection. Upon entering, I noticed a brown, paper covering, blocking the opening to the liquor store portion of the establishment. There was a sign on the door stating "Beer, Wine and Spirits can be purchased in the restaurant". On the adjacent window, there was a commercial poster, "Wine Cellar and Bar Coming Soon", complete with an artist rendering of the proposed transformation. In the past when you entered this licensee's vestibule, you have two choices. Either you went to the right side to enter the liquor store, or through the left side door to enter the cafeteria-style restaurant. I entered the restaurant portion, where I identified myself as a Prince George's County Liquor Inspector and asked to speak to the manager. I introduced myself to the manager, Mr. Lee, and told him that I would be completing an assigned inspection. I asked Mr. Lee if they had contacted the Board of License Commissioners about these changes and submitted drawings for the work being done. He stated that he was not the one to ask and the person that would have that knowledge is currently unavailable. I warned Mr. Lee that alterations should always get Board approval and failure to comply would be in violation of our rules and subject to fines. I told Mr. Lee that I would be taking pictures to submit with my inspection and advised the licensee to be knowledgeable of the subject and to contact the Board at their soonest convenience to get advice and consent if they had not already done so. The rest

of the inspection followed the rules and regulations. Since I had no knowledge if paperwork was submitted, I checked the box to indicate an alteration was in progress and took pictures to substantiate my findings. I told him the Board would review my report to see if this needs to be further addressed. Mr. Lee was very pleasant and cooperative. On January 8, 2021, Deputy Chief Mendoza confirmed that I should return to the licensed premises and issue a violation of RR No. 37: No licensee should make any alternations or installations without approval. On January 20, 2021, I revisited t/a MidAtlantic Seafood Restaurant. The manager was not available, so an appointment was made for January 21, 2021 to issue the violation. I took current pictures. There have been no noticeable changes since I had first taken pictures at the site. On January 21, 2021, I visited MidAtlantic Seafood at approximately 10:30 a.m. Introductions were made with management. I gave them a full explanation of RR No. 37 and provided them with a hard copy marking the area of focus. Edward Lee said that he did not specifically remember if the Board had been contacted over this matter. I told the licensee to look for any submitted documentation and contact the Board, otherwise the violation could go forward. The licensee had confirmed that he contacted the City of Laurel and Prince George's County Government to acquire the appropriate building and fire permits. He said that the hired contractor oversaw notifying everyone required for permits and thought he had contacted the Board. I kindly reminded him that he is responsible for himself, his agent, employees and operators. I advised Mr. Lee to always contact the Board any time they are thinking of making a change to avoid overstepping any boundaries. Everyone throughout the entire process was very cooperative and respectful.

Edward Lee: Everything the inspector said was spot on. I should have better relayed this information to my contractor, as he had assured me everything was taken care of. As soon as the issue was brought to my attention, I was happy to meet with the inspectors and to submit everything necessary for approval. I'm not sure if you have received what I have since submitted, including a floorplan.

Commissioner Camacho: Have we received the renderings?

Ms. Little: Yes, it is in our possession.

Edward Lee: We are very sorry and have a good track record.

Commissioner Camacho: I move to find licensee **t/a MidAtlantic Seafood** in violation as charged with a fine of \$1,500, payable to the Board.

Commissioner Norman: These are Covid-19 times, are you able to make the lump payment or shall we spread it out?

Edward Lee: I can make the full lump payment.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Norman.

After Board vote, the motion carries.

Adjourned: 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Jamie Schaefer
Administrative Aide BOLC*

