September 9, 2026
9200 Basil Court
Largo, MD 20774
Virtual Hearing

Present:

Oretha Bridgwaters-Simms, Chair
Dennis Smith, Commissioner
Tammie Norman, Commissioner
Ono Achale, Commissioner
Kirk McLean, Commissioner
Jason DeLoach, Esquire, Counsel
Terence Sheppard, Director
Robert Clark, Chief Liquor Inspector
Leonard Vauss, Deputy Chief Liquor Inspector
Christian Mendoza, Deputy Chief Liquor Inspector
Patricia Bell, Administrative Manager
Katrice James, Administrative Aide
Keyanna Little, Administrative Aide
Ariana Posada-Mejia, Administrative Aide
Alecia Hughes, Assistant to the Director

Start Time: 7:04 p.m.

Commissioner Bridgwaters-Simms: At the Board of License Commissioners, we endeavor to be as efficient as possible in our virtual environment. Thank you for your patience. This is a public meeting subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act so a truthful, transparent, open, and honest dialogue and record is required. As such, there are some formalities that will take place that may appear redundant but nonetheless are important and required to ensure compliance with the law.

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 of the BOLC. You may add information to the record aslong as it is information that has been discussed in this hearing.

REGULAR SESSION

1. Mark Srour, President/Secretary/Treasurer, **t/a Cornerstone Grill & Loft,** located at 7325 Baltimore Avenue, College Park, 20740. For an alleged violation of R.R. 26 B (14) The commission of any act by the licensee, his/her agents or employees that constitutes a danger to the peace and safety of the neighborhood. Represented by **Linda Carter, Esquire.**

   Director Sheppard explained the procedure for the hearing as follows:
   Chief Clark would present his case first and call his witnesses. After each witness, the commissioners would have an opportunity to ask questions, followed by Ms. Carter's opportunity to cross-examine. Chief Clark would then have an opportunity to redirect. The same procedure would apply to each witness. After Chief Clark completed his witnesses, Ms. Carter would present her case and call any witnesses. The commissioners would then ask questions, followed by Chief Clark's cross-examination and Ms. Carter's redirect. After all witnesses testified, Chief Clark would give a closing statement, followed by Ms. Carter's closing statement.

   Before presenting the case, Chief Clark stated that he was removing several incidents from consideration because he did not believe they were relevant or sufficiently connected to Cornerstone Grill and Loft:

   1. Case No. 2025-207850, involving an individual allegedly denied entry because she was "not pretty enough."
   2. Case No. 2025-219582, involving theft of a scanning device.
   3. Case No. 2025-244200, which occurred at RJ Bentley's.
   4. Case No. 2024-41735, the official police documents did not mention Cornerstone.
   5. Case No. 2025-108912, involving Cornerstone refusing entry to a person, which Chief Clark characterized as appropriate conduct.
   6. Case No. 2024-50578, the report did not contain sufficient information concerning Cornerstone.

   Chief Clark read the violation report into the record. He stated that the investigative report was prepared in response to multiple complaints from several sources, including the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission (ATCC) and officials from the University of Maryland Police Department alleging that Cornerstone Grill and Loft sold alcohol to minors, overserved patrons, accepted fraudulent identification and operated beyond its approved occupancy capacity.

Chief Clark stated that University of Maryland Police reported numerous incidents involving underage individuals, many identified as university students, being transported to local hospitals for alcohol-related intoxication.
Acting Captain Stein subsequently provided more than 30 police incident reports involving Cornerstone.

Chief Clark stated that the reports documented alcohol-related medical emergencies, underage intoxication, disorderly public disturbances, assaults, violent altercations, and a DUI incident.

Chief Clark characterized the reports as evidence of:

- Over-service of alcohol.
- Service of alcohol to underage individuals.
- Failure to maintain an orderly premises.
- A burden on public safety resources.

Chief Clark stated that summaries were included in the investigation, while the more detailed police reports were incorporated as supporting evidence.

Chief Clark asserted that Cornerstone had demonstrated a "sustained and escalating pattern of operational deficiencies" that compromised public safety, violated regulatory requirements, and placed an undue burden on law enforcement and emergency services. He identified recurring alcohol-related medical emergencies, underage consumption, disorderly conduct, violent altercations, and other safety incidents as evidence of what he characterized as a systemic failure of management oversight and responsible alcohol-service practices.

He further cited recent violations for:

- Rule and Regulation No. 1 — sale of alcohol to a minor.
- Rule and Regulation No. 83 — failure to have a certified alcohol-awareness individual on site while alcoholic beverages were being served.

Chief Clark stated that, despite prior citations, the licensee had failed to implement effective corrective measures or demonstrate the ability to maintain safe and compliant operations. His ultimate assessment was that Cornerstone Grill and Loft posed a "significant and ongoing threat" to the peace, safety, and welfare of the community. He stated that the violations met the criteria of Rule and Regulation No. 26 (B)(14).

Chief Clark identified the following prior violations:

- December 6, 2024: Cornerstone was cited for Rule and Regulation No. 1, sale to a minor, and was found in violation.
- December 6, 2024: Cornerstone was cited under Rule and Regulation No. 83 for not having a certified alcohol-awareness person to monitor intoxication and enforce cutoff points and was found in violation.
- October 24, 2025: Cornerstone received another Rule and Regulation No. 83 alcohol-awareness violation and was again found in violation.
- February 2, 2026: Cornerstone received another violation for sales to a minor; Chief Clark stated that the matter was heard May 13, 2026, and that Cornerstone was again found in violation.

Chief Clark stated that, after removing some reports, his numerical summary covered 37 total incidents reviewed.

He reported the following categories and figures:

- 21 injured, sick, or disorderly calls directly tied to intoxication.
- 17 confirmed ambulance transports, including 14 individuals under age 21.
- 11 incidents involving patrons who were unconscious or semi-conscious.
- 4 incidents involving repeated vomiting and/or head injuries.
- 4 patrons found on sidewalks, in bathrooms, or in nearby residence halls.
- 23 incidents involving individuals under the age of 21.
- 2 incidents involving 17-year-old juveniles.
- A documented incident involving a fake identification.
- Multiple incidents involving underage individuals consuming substantial quantities of liquor, including one report involving approximately 15–18 shots consumed by an individual.
- 7 documented disorderly calls.
- 2 individuals refusing to leave the premises.
- 5 instances of resistance to removal by security or police.
- 2 incidents of individuals spitting on staff.
- 7 assault-related calls, including one involving a bottle strike to the head.
- 7 patron-to-patron violent situations.
- 5 physical altercations involving bouncers.
- 1 threat of violence.
- 1 domestic-violence incident connected to events at the bar.
- 1 DUI arrest.

Chief Clark requested that the entire investigation booklet be entered into the record. The Board had no objection to this request.

Ms. Carter Cross-Examined and questioned Chief Clark's numerical report.

Ms. Carter focused on the numerical summary on Page 7, Section IV, concerning the 37 total incidents reviewed.

Ms. Carter pointed out that the individual numbers listed in the report appeared to add up to substantially more than 37. She asked whether those figures represented separate violations or whether multiple categories could arise from the same underlying incident.

Chief Clark confirmed that the 37 figures represented the total incidents reviewed, rather than 65 separate incidents.

Ms. Carter asked whether the 43 listed under another section were actually part of the 37 total incidents, Chief Clark responded that the 23 incidents involving individuals under 21 would "more than likely" be part of the 37. When asked whether the same principle applied to Sections C, D, and E, he ultimately indicated that they were part of the total 37 incidents.

This exchange established an important distinction. The numerous numerical figures in the report were not necessarily separate incidents or separate violations; multiple reported circumstances or categories could arise from the same incident.

Ms. Carter then questioned the time period covered by the investigation. She stated that the period was approximately 789 days.

Chief Clark initially indicated that he would need to verify the exact calculation. He identified the review period as beginning January 1, 2024, through February 28, 2026.

Ms. Carter confirmed that Page 7 identified the review period as January 2024 through February 2026, and Chief Clark agreed.

The testimony then remained focused on clarifying how the 37 incidents were counted.

Ms. Carter's questioning began by challenging the way the investigation's incident numbers were characterized, rather than simply accepting every numerical figure as a separate violation.

Officer Denham, of the University of Maryland Police Department, was called as Chief Clark's first witness.

Officer Denham testified that she has approximately three years of experience with the University of Maryland Police Department and extensive training in recognizing alcohol impairment, including academy DUI training and TIPS certification. She estimated encountering thousands of intoxicated individuals during her career.

Officer Denham responded to Cornerstone Grill and Loft on February 22, 2024, following a report of an individual who had fallen down stairs and was unconscious. Upon arrival, she found a 20-year-old woman unconscious and unresponsive near the stairway. Bouncers were present and provided information about the incident.

Officer Denham observed a strong odor of alcohol and, based on her observations and information provided at the scene, concluded that the woman was intoxicated. Emergency medical personnel, assisted by bouncers, transported her by ambulance. She remained unconscious and unresponsive and vomited while being moved. Officer Denham did not accompany her to the hospital.

She testified that she did not conduct further investigation and could not determine how long she had been at the establishment, who she was with, or what specific alcoholic beverage, if any, she had consumed. She confirmed that her written report did not state that she had been drinking at Cornerstone.

Officer Denham described Cornerstone's Thursday through Saturday evening atmosphere as "chaotic," citing large crowds, patrons sitting on the balcony railing, and individuals observed appearing highly intoxicated near the roadway.

She stated that information provided during her testimony that was not included in her report was based on her recollection of the incident, which she remembered clearly because it was one of her first injured-person cases after completing field training.

Officer Coull, of the University of Maryland Police Department, was called as Chief Clark's second witness.

Officer Coull testified that he has more than four years of experience with the University of Maryland Police Department and extensive DUI and impaired-driving training. He estimated encountering 50–100 intoxicated individuals during his career.

Officer Coull responded to Cornerstone Grill and Loft on October 9, 2025, regarding a 17-year-old female reported to be unconscious and intoxicated. He encountered her friends outside and observed two individuals believed to be Cornerstone employees carrying her from the establishment.

The female was unconscious, unable to communicate, and had a strong odor of alcohol. Her friends stated that she had been drinking at Cornerstone, although they could not identify the specific beverage or amount consumed. Based on his observations and the information provided, Officer Coull concluded that she was intoxicated.

She was transported by ambulance to the hospital, and Officer Coull accompanied her. He spoke with her grandparents, who questioned how she had been served alcohol. Officer Coull stated he did not know. He later found out she was an employee of Cornerstone.

Ms. Carter asked Officer Coull if he knew the female's BAC or whether drug testing was performed.

Officer Coull did not conduct a follow-up investigation and did not know the female's BAC or whether drug testing was performed. He described Cornerstone's weekend atmosphere as hectic, overcrowded, and "very party-like." He also confirmed that his written report did not document his conversation with the female's friends.

Officer Martinez, of the University of Maryland Police Department, was called as Chief Clark's third witness.

Officer Martinez testified that he has approximately three years of experience with the University of Maryland Police Department and training in recognizing alcohol impairment. He estimated encountering at least 100 intoxicated individuals during his career.

Officer Martinez responded to Cornerstone Grill and Loft on October 25, 2025, regarding a heavily intoxicated male. He found the 17-year-old outside the establishment, in and out of consciousness and unable to walk or support himself. He observed vomit, a strong odor of alcohol, a flushed face, and glassy eyes. A person accompanying him stated that he had consumed an unknown amount of alcohol at Cornerstone.

Emergency medical services transported the male to the hospital, where he was determined to require medical treatment. Officer Martinez did not accompany him. His investigation revealed that the male possessed a fictitious Pennsylvania driver's license and was actually 17 years old. He did not identify who served the alcohol, the specific beverage or amount consumed, or how long the male had been at the establishment.

Officer Martinez concluded that the male was intoxicated based on both his observations and information provided at the scene.

Ms. Carter asked Officer Martinez if he knew the male's BAC or whether drug testing was performed.

Mr. Martinez did not know the male's blood alcohol level or whether a drug panel was conducted.

Officer Martinez described Cornerstone as busy, crowded, and sometimes volatile, with incidents involving alcohol intoxication, fights, disorderly conduct, and medical emergencies occurring particularly on weekends and during large sporting events.

Lieutenant Smallwood, of The University of Maryland Police Department, was called as Chief Clark's fourth witness.

Lieutenant Smallwood testified that he has nearly 20 years of experience with the University of Maryland Police Department and extensive training in recognizing alcohol impairment, including field sobriety, preliminary breath testing, and advanced roadside impaired-driving enforcement. He estimated encountering thousands of intoxicated individuals.

Lieutenant Smallwood testified that on May 11, 2025, he conducted a traffic stop near Baltimore Avenue and Knox Road after observing a Honda Civic accelerate improperly, make a wide turn, swerve, and travel approximately 40 mph in a 25-mph zone. The 21-year-old driver was given field sobriety tests, which he failed. The driver stated he was coming from "Corner," which Lieutenant Smallwood understood to mean Cornerstone.

Lieutenant Smallwood concluded that the driver was intoxicated. The driver was arrested and later found guilty of negligent driving, but not DUI. Lieutenant Smallwood did not recall how the case resulted in the lesser charge.

Ms. Carter questioned Lieutenant Smallwood's interpretation of "Corner" as "Cornerstone" and noted a discrepancy between his testimony and the written report regarding the 21-year-old driver's intended whereabouts.

Lieutenant Smallwood clarified that the arresting officer prepared the formal alcohol-influence report, while he prepared a supplemental narrative. During questioning, it is common for some individuals to switch information around while speaking with different officers. He acknowledged that the driver had reportedly told the arresting officer that he had consumed two drinks approximately 1½ hours before the stop and could not recall what type of drinks they were. Lieutenant Smallwood confirmed that the driver specifically said "Corner," not "Cornerstone," and that interpreting this as Cornerstone was his belief or assumption.

Ms. Carter presented evidence and a corrective action plan regarding Cornerstone Grill and Loft. Following receipt of the investigative report from Chief Clark, she obtained police records through a Public Information Act request covering the 7300 block of Baltimore Avenue. Ms. Carter noted that the records included numerous incidents unrelated to Cornerstone and emphasized that CVS generated more calls for service in the area than Cornerstone.

Ms. Carter acknowledged that Cornerstone has experienced compliance issues but argued that the establishment is not solely responsible for problems occurring throughout College Park. She also noted that Cornerstone has not been closed for exceeding capacity, has maintained required licenses and permits, and has had its security plan approved by county police.

Ms. Carter described several measures already implemented and proposed additional corrective measures such as:

- Electronic ID scanning and electronic payment for cover charges.
- Increased security staffing and regular security meetings.
- An incident-reporting system requiring employees to document incidents before leaving their shifts.
- Increased owner and management presence, particularly on weekends.
- Approximately 28 security cameras, with discussions regarding providing police with real-time access.
- Expanded alcohol-awareness training and certification for employees.
- A strict policy requiring identification for patrons appearing under age 40, with violations subject to termination.
- An upgraded ID-scanning system and consideration of additional police presence on busy nights to address counterfeit IDs
- Potential closure or modification of the balcony area due to safety concerns.
- Independent testing of the establishment's ID-checking and alcohol-service procedures.
- A comprehensive operations manual establishing responsibilities and compliance standards for all employees.
- Requiring employees to acknowledge the alcohol-awareness policy and periodically re-sign it.
- Reporting patrons who use counterfeit IDs or violate conduct standards to the University Honor Board.

Ms. Carter acknowledged that counterfeit IDs that scan successfully remain a significant challenge and requested input from the Board and police regarding additional measures.

Ms. Carter stated that Cornerstone currently has numerous employees with alcohol-awareness certifications, with additional employees scheduled for certification.

Mr. Srour testified to his commitment to implementing the corrective action plan and maintaining compliance.

Ms. Carter stated that the corrective action plan was submitted for the Board's consideration, along with a September 8 synopsis addressing incidents identified in the investigative report.

The Board accepted the synopsis into evidence without objection.

Ms. Carter emphasized that the goal is to improve Cornerstone's operations and ensure that the establishment remains a safe and compliant part of the College Park community.

Mr. Srour acknowledged the seriousness of the matter and affirmed his commitment to following the corrective action plan and all representations made to the Board.

Mr. Lambert testified that he has served as General Manager of Cornerstone since 2007 and has approximately 20 years of experience with the establishment. He has repeatedly completed TIPS training. Mr. Lambert addressed the intoxicated juvenile incident and acknowledged that the individual should have been better monitored. He stated that management generally learns about an incident a day later or within that same week. Mr. Lambert explained that Cornerstone uses a multi-step entry process. Patrons must present identification for scanning, complete a payment process when applicable, and pass additional visual observations by staff. Employees are trained to identify signs of intoxication, including difficulty retrieving identification, lack of attentiveness, poor eye contact, stumbling, or other impairment indicators. Patrons displaying signs of intoxication may be denied entry or asked to leave.

Mr. Lambert stated that approximately 90% of Cornerstone's 72 employees are students, with typical employee tenure of one to two years. He explained that management communicates with employees through the Seven Shifts scheduling and messaging system, regular departmental meetings approximately every two weeks, and pre-shift security meetings. Security staff and managers also use an ongoing group communication system to report incidents, identify problematic patrons, and coordinate responses. Incidents are reviewed at the end of shifts to determine whether a formal incident report is required. Cornerstone has increased security coverage and intends to continue hiring additional personnel as necessary, particularly/Maryland alcohol-awareness trainers. Mr. Lambert became a TIPS trainer himself in January this year.

Mr. Srour acknowledged that Cornerstone previously operated under less formal procedures and that employee turnover, changes in clientele, and evolving laws contributed to the need for stricter operational standards. He testified that management has implemented a more structured, corporate-style approach with increased accountability.

Mr. Srour spoke in regard to the prior sales-to-minor violations, stating that employees were immediately terminated when violations occurred and that management held meetings to determine how to prevent future violations. He emphasized that employees understand that failure to comply with alcohol-service requirements can result in termination.

Chief Mitchell, of the University of Maryland College Park Police Department, addressed the Board regarding the incidents at Cornerstone and the potential impact of a closure.

Chief Mitchell emphasized his extensive law-enforcement experience and more than 50 years of observing the College Park community. He described the community as having improved significantly and stressed the importance of cooperation among police, the university, and local businesses. He stated that he has worked with Cornerstone for approximately 16 years and has generally found owner Mark responsive to police concerns and willing to correct problems and communicate expectations to staff.

Chief Mitchell expressed disappointment regarding the current incidents at Cornerstone and stated that he does not condone conduct that endangers students. He noted that police reports involving licensed establishments are routinely provided to the Liquor Board.

He identified leadership and management oversight as potential areas requiring improvement, noting that employees generally perform well in areas that management consistently monitors. He believed the current issues were fixable and offered assistance with security and corrective measures.

Chief Mitchell expressed concern that closing Cornerstone would not stop students from drinking. He stated that students could instead obtain alcohol elsewhere, including through liquor stores and fake IDs, and consume it in locations with less supervision, potentially increasing calls to fraternity houses, sororities, and other locations.

He discussed the significant increase in student mental-health-related incidents since COVID-19 and raised concerns about alcohol use in combination with prescribed medications.

Chief Mitchell emphasized the importance of the business community's cooperation with law enforcement, noting that local businesses have supported additional cameras and police resources and that additional officers are deployed on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights to improve student safety.

Regarding Cornerstone specifically, Chief Mitchell acknowledged its substantial volume of customers and stated that, while violations should ideally be zero, Cornerstone is not the biggest problem among College Park establishments.

Chief Mitchell concluded determining the appropriate action was ultimately the Board's responsibility and expressed confidence in the testimony of his officers and the professionalism of the Board.

Chief Clark's investigation concluded that Cornerstone Grill & Loft demonstrated a prolonged and escalating pattern of operational and management failures involving alcohol-related medical emergencies, underage drinking, disorderly conduct, violence, and other citations had not resulted in sufficient corrective action. The frequency and severity of incidents placed an undue burden on law enforcement and emergency services. The report attributed these issues to deficiencies in management oversight and responsible alcohol service, including periods without certified managers.

Based on the totality of the findings, Chief Clark determined that Cornerstone posed an ongoing threat to the peace, safety, and welfare of the community and met the criteria under Regulation 26(B)(14) for finding the licensee no longer fit or proper to hold a license. safety incidents.

Ms. Carter disputed Chief Clark's conclusion that the establishment caused or contributed to escalating violence in College Park. She argued that the record did not establish a causal connection between Cornerstone and the reported incidents.

Ms. Carter questioned whether intoxication-related incidents were caused by alcohol consumed at Cornerstone, noting that many reports lacked BAC or drug-panel results and did not establish how long after leaving Cornerstone the incidents occurred.

Ms. Carter noted that the City of College Park has not protested Cornerstone's license renewal, and that Prince George's County Police Department has consistently approved the establishment's security plan. Cornerstone has also increased security spending and agreed to have a uniformed police officer assist at the entrance on busy nights.

Ms. Carter disputed that Cornerstone creates an undue burden on law enforcement and compared its call volume with other businesses in the area. She also requested that the Board limit consideration of violations occurring more than two years ago and avoid revisiting violations for which Cornerstone has already been sanctioned.

Ms. Carter acknowledged two prior instances involving a lack of certified managers but stated that corrective action has been taken. Mr. Lambert became a certified TIPS trainer, and the establishment now maintains multiple certified employees on each shift when the upstairs area is open.

Ms. Carter stated that Cornerstone has implemented a comprehensive corrective action plan, operations manual, incident-reporting procedures, employee training, and increased oversight. She disputed the report's assertion that the lack of certified managers caused increased violence, noting that several incidents involved circumstances unrelated to the establishment.

Ms. Carter concluded by emphasizing Cornerstone's ongoing corrective efforts and requested 10 additional days to submit a supplemental memorandum addressing the proximity of fraternities and sororities and the potential impact of drug use on apparent intoxication.

Commissioner Norman moved to grant Ms. Carter a 10-day period to submit additional documentation and to have the Board reconvene following its review, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**

After Board vote, the motion carries.

Adjourned: 10:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ariana Posada-Mejia

Administrative Aide BOLC