October 27, 2026
9200 Basil Court
Largo, MD 20774
Virtual Hearing

Present:

Oretha Bridgwaters-Simms, Chair
Dennis Smith, Commissioner
Tammie Norman, Commissioner
Ono Achale, 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: 10:08 a.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.

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1. Substitution of Corporate Officers application, **t/a MGM National Harbor,** Class B(EF), Beer, Wine and Liquor, 101 MGM National Avenue, Oxon Hill 20745, Padou Kabchi, Authorized Person to serve as a licensee on the license. Represented by **Linda Carter, Esquire.**

   Ms. Carter advised the Board that the substitution filing had been submitted and that all information pertaining to the applicant remained true and correct. She further noted that an amendment had been made to the application to remove Ms. Johnson, who had retired and was no longer employed by MGM National Harbor.

   Ms. Carter stated that Mr. Kabchi had spent most of his professional career with MGM National Harbor, having begun as an intern in 2009. She reported that MGM National Harbor employs approximately 800 individuals, including approximately 700 employees in non-culinary positions. She further stated that employees, including valet personnel, retail staff, and floor staff, are certified in alcohol awareness. She stated that MGM National Harbor takes responsible alcohol service seriously and noted that, due to state gaming laws, nearly all employees are at least 21 years of age.

   Ms. Carter asked the standard questions typically used to qualify the Substitution of Corporate Officers application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D's, as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. The applicant was able to answer each question.

   Commissioner Norman motions to approve the Substitution of Corporate Officers application for t/a MGM National Harbor seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**

   After Board Vote, the motion carries.

TRANSFER

2. **t/a Red Robin Gourmet Burgers & Brews,** Timothy M. Furr, Member/Authorized Person, David M. Coyne, Member/Authorized Person, for a Class B(BLX), Beer, Wine and Liquor for the use of Op Burgers MD, LLC, located at 15650 Excelsior Drive, Bowie, 20716. Transfer from Jesse Griffith, Member, President/Treasurer, Sarah Mussetter, Vice President/Secretary, for the use of Red Robin International, Inc., t/a Red Robin Gourmet Burgers & Brews, located at 15650 Excelsior Drive, Bowie, 20716. Represented by **Leanne Schrecengost, Esquire.**

   Ms. Schrecengost stated that Burgers MD LLC had purchased, or was in the process of purchasing, 8 Red Robin locations in Maryland, including the Bowie location. The transfer would change the restaurant's operation from a corporate-run establishment to a franchise-run establishment; however, the restaurant's operations, staffing, and hours of operation would remain unchanged. The establishment employs 43 individuals, 20 of whom are involved in the sale and service of alcoholic beverages. Employees receive training through Red Robin's responsible alcohol service program. Additionally, eight employees, including management and bartenders, are TIPS-certified through a state-approved training program. The restaurant's policy requires identification checks for individuals who appear to be under the age of 39, with employees trained to verify the identification's authenticity, date of birth, expiration date, and photograph.

   Ms. Schrecengost stated that approximately 95% of the restaurant's sales are food-related, while alcoholic beverages account for approximately 5%. The hours of operation are 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Sunday through Thursday, and 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Friday and Saturday.

   Ms. Schrecengost asked the standard questions typically used to qualify the Transfer application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D's as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. Both applicants were able to answer each question and acknowledged their responsibility for any violations that may occur at the establishment following approval of the transfer.

   Commissioner Norman motions to approve the Transfer application for t/a Red Robin Gourmet & Brews, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**

   After Board Vote, the motion carries.

3. **t/a Mega Licores,** Bina J. Gupta, Member/Co-Member, Prem K. Gupta Member/Co-Member, for a Class A, Beer, Wine and Liquor for the use of BeeRPK, LLC, located at 6333 New Hampshire Avenue, Takoma Park, 20912. Transfer from Simerjit Kaur, Managing Member, for the use of Mega Licores, LLC, t/a Mega Licores, located at 6333 New Hampshire Avenue, Takoma Park, 20912. Represented by **Evan Meyers, Esquire.** Amendment 8-12 to 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 a.m. Monday-Sunday.
   Mr. Myers proffered that all information contained in the application remained true and accurate, with the exception of the hours of operation. He advised the Board that the application listed the hours as 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m.; however, the correct hours were 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m., seven days a week.
   Commissioner Norman motions to amend the application to reflect the hours of operation as 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m., Monday through Sunday, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**
   After Board vote, the motion carries.
   Mr. Myers asked the standard questions typically used to qualify the Transfer application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D's as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. Both applicants were able to answer each question.
   Commissioner Norman motions to approve the Transfer application for t/a Mega Licores, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**
   After Board Vote, the motion carries.

4. **t/a Oliver's Old Towne Tavern,** Cameron Manesh, Sole Member, for a Class BL(R), Beer, Wine and Liquor for the use of Oliver's 531, LLC, located at 531 Main Street, Laurel, 20707. Transfer from Randall Ray Carmichael, Managing Member, Lori Leisher, Member, for the use of W & C, LLC, t/a Oliver's Old Towne Tavern, located at 531 Main Street, Laurel, 20707.
   Applicant is not represented by an attorney, acknowledges his right to an attorney and agrees to move forward without an attorney.
   Mr. Manesh stated that all information contained in the application remained true and accurate since its submission. He denied having any felony convictions or alcohol-related or gambling violations. He further advised that he had reviewed the Board of License Commissioners' Rules and Regulations and explained that the transfer was being requested because the previous owner had retired and he would be assuming ownership.
   Chair Bridgwater-Simms asked the standard questions typically used to qualify the Transfer application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D's as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. The applicant was able to answer each question.
   Commissioner Norman motions to approve the Transfer application for t/a Oliver's Old Towne Tavern, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**
   After Board Vote, the motion carries.

5. **t/a Cuzco Restaurant #2,** Jose Luis Perez Benitez, President/Secretary/ Treasurer, for a Class BL(R), Beer, Wine and Liquor for the use of Cuzcorp, Inc, located at 2051 University Blvd, Adelphi, 20783. Transfer from Jose A. Ruiz, President/Secretary/ Treasurer, for the use of Cuzcorp, Inc., t/a Cuzco Restaurant #2, located at 2051 University Blvd, Adelphi, 20783. Represented by **Benjamin Carter, Esquire.**
   Mr. Carter stated that Mr. Perez Benitez had been made familiar with the Board's rules and regulations and understood that he could be held personally responsible for violations, even if he was not present at the establishment when a violation occurred. He confirmed that the information provided in the application remained true and correct and that, if approved, there would be no change to the establishment's mode of operation.
   Mr. Carter asked the standard questions typically used to qualify the Transfer application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D's as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. The applicant was able to answer each question.
   Commissioner Norman asked Mr. Benitez whether the establishment was part of a family business. Mr. Benitez confirmed that it was and stated that his cousins also worked at the restaurant. He further indicated that he was a recent employee of the establishment.
   Commissioner Norman motions to approve the Transfer application for t/a Cuzco Restaurant #2, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**
   After Board Vote, the motion carries.

6. **t/a Bom Garden Korean BBQ & Sushi,** Kyeong Yong Jeon, Owner/Member, for a Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor for the use of KJ Jeon, LLC, located at 5027 Garrett Avenue, Beltsville, 20705. Transfer from Zheng Hua Liang, President/Secretary/ Treasurer, for the use of Cindy Piao, Inc., t/a Gah-Rham Restaurant, located at 5027 Garrett Avenue, Beltsville, 20705. Represented by **Linda Carter, Esquire.**
   Ms. Carter stated that the application remained true and correct and that Mr. Chang was familiar with the Board's rules and regulations. She advised that Mr. Chang was certified in alcohol awareness and had more than a decade of experience as a head chef and sushi chef. She further explained that he intended to operate the restaurant as his full-time business and planned to invest in renovations to improve the establishment's quality.
   Ms. Carter stated that the restaurant employed approximately eight individuals, several of whom were expected to remain employed following the transfer. Mr. Chang intended to have at least four employees obtain alcohol awareness certification to ensure that certified personnel would be present on the licensed premises. She further advised that Mr. Chang had approximately 15 to 20 years of experience working with alcohol sales and had never been involved in a violation.
   Ms. Carter asked the standard questions typically used to qualify the Transfer application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D's as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. The applicant was able to answer each question.
   Commissioner Norman motions to approve the Transfer application for t/a Bom Garden Korean BBQ & Sushi, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**
   After Board Vote, the motion carries.

NEW – CLASS B(BLX), BEER, WINE AND LIQUOR

7. **t/a First Watch #1211,** Christopher A. Tomasso, CEO/President, Jay A. Wolszczak, Secretary/CLO, Christopher Humphries, Compliance Officer, for a Class B(BLX), Beer, Wine and Liquor for the use of First Watch Restaurants, Inc., located at 9680 Lottsford Court, Upper Marlboro, 20774. Represented by **Leanne Schrecengost, Esquire.**
   Chief Clark gave a maps presentation.
   Ms. Schrecengost informed the Board that First Watch #1211 would be the company's third location in Prince George's County, with existing locations in Bowie and Laurel. She stated that all three applicants were already approved by the Board as licensees for those locations. The establishment opened to the public on July 27, 2026, and was seeking a liquor license to expand its beverage offerings.
   Ms. Schrecengost advised that the establishment had a total seating capacity of 191. Although the application referenced a patio area, she clarified that the area was fully enclosed and part of the restaurant, with no outdoor seating. The establishment employed approximately 38 individuals, 18 of whom would be involved in the sale or service of alcoholic beverages.
   Ms. Schrecengost further explained that all employees received internal alcohol awareness training through the company's virtual learning academy upon hiring. Managers and employees involved in the sale or service of alcohol would also obtain alcohol awareness certification. The establishment's policy is to check identification for all customers and not accept vertical identification cards. The proposed hours of operation are daily from 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
   Ms. Schrecengost asked the standard questions typically used to qualify the Transfer application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D's as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. All applicants were able to answer each question.
   Commissioner Norman requested clarification regarding the floor plan and the area identified as a patio.
   Ms. Schrecengost clarified that the area was enclosed and included seating for 50 patrons. It was further explained that the application packet contained both a site plan and a floor plan.
   Commissioner Norman motions to approve the Transfer application for t/a First Watch #1211, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**
   After Board Vote, the motion carries.

NEW – CLASS B, BEER, WINE AND LIQUOR

Director Sheppard read the Rules of Engagement as this is a competition.

8. **t/a Crab Boat Restaurant**, YanJuan Zheng, Member, for a Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor for the use of Clinton Crabboat, LLC, located at 6410 Coventry Way, Clinton, 20735. Represented by **Leanne Schrecengost, Esquire.**
   Chief Clark gave a maps presentation.
   Ms. Schrecengost explained that the restaurant occupied the former Levi's space on Coventry Way and had a seating capacity of approximately 250 patrons, including 156 seats in the main dining room, 64 seats in a private room, and approximately 30 seats in the bar area. The restaurant specializes in seafood boils and fried seafood baskets, offering a variety of sauces and additional menu items.
   Ms. Schrecengost requested that the application be amended to reflect the correct hours of operation for Friday and Saturday, from 12:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., rather than the previously listed closing time of 10:30 p.m.
   Commissioner Norman motions to amend the hours of operation for Crab Boat Restaurant to 12:00 p.m. through 11:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**
   After Board vote, the motion carries.
   Ms. Schrecengost stated that the restaurant employed 15 individuals, five of whom would be involved in the sale or service of alcoholic beverages. All five employees would obtain alcohol awareness certification. The establishment's policy would be to check identification for anyone appearing to be under 40 years of age and not accept vertical identification cards.
   Ms. Schrecengost advised that Ms. Zheng owned 80% of the business and would oversee daily operations, managing the establishment six days per week. She had nearly 20 years of experience in the restaurant industry, including more than 12 years in management and ownership, held TIPS certification, and had no history of violations. The remaining 20% owner, Mr. Chen, would serve in a consulting capacity and visit the establishment approximately three days per week. He previously operated a restaurant in Waldorf, Maryland.
   Ms. Schrecengost further explained that the restaurant anticipated approximately 80% of its sales to come from food and 20% from alcoholic beverages, consistent with its sister location in Waldorf. The restaurant held a soft opening on September 1, 2026, and officially opened on September 25, 2026. Ms. Zheng is seeking the liquor license to complement the restaurant's menu and support its operating expenses.

Ms. Schrecengost reported that the restaurant had partnered with Ebony Sunshine Inc. (ESI), a nonprofit organization recognized under Section 501(c)(3), which supports and inspires children through faith-based programs involving drama, sports, and the arts. The restaurant provided its private meeting room for the organization's children's drama program on the second Saturday of each month. The restaurant had also partnered with the Sigma Gamma Rho sorority to host educational events.
Ms. Schrecengost received positive feedback from District 9 Board of Education member CJ Saunders, who praised the establishment's cleanliness, hospitality, and willingness to provide space for community meetings and events.
Ms. Schrecengost asked the standard questions typically used to qualify for the Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D's as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. The applicant was able to answer each question.

9. **t/a Taqueria Maria Bonita,** Gabriela Flores, President, for a Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor for the use of Taqueria Maria Bonita Riverdale, LLC, located at 5612 Kenilworth Avenue, Riverdale, 20737.
   Applicant is not represented by an attorney, acknowledges her right to an attorney and agrees to move forward without an attorney.
   Chief Clark gave a maps presentation.
   Ms. Flores explained that Taqueria Maria Bonita is a family-owned Mexican restaurant that she operates with her mother. The restaurant, which opened in 2022, specializes in authentic Mexican cuisine inspired by Mexico City, including tacos al pastor, tortas locas, quesadillas made with handmade corn tortillas, carne asada, and vegetarian options such as huitlacoche and flor de calabaza.
   Ms. Flores stated that obtaining the Class B, Beer, Wine, and Liquor license would enhance the dining experience by complementing the restaurant's menu and reflecting the food culture of Mexico City, where her family originated.
   Chair Bridgwater-Simms asked the standard questions typically used to qualify for the Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D's as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. The applicant was able to answer each question.

10. **t/a Shantoo,** Shawn Demetrius, Owner, for a Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor for the use of Southeastern Foods, LLC, located at 1290 Crain Highway, Bowie, 20716.
Applicant is not represented by an attorney, acknowledges his right to an attorney and agrees to move forward without an attorney.
Chief Clark gave a maps presentation.
Mr. Demetrius informed the Board that he established the restaurant in 2024 after a cancer diagnosis and subsequent surgery prevented him from continuing his previous employment. He noted that he had approximately ten years of restaurant management experience in Jamaica.
Mr. Demetrius stated that the establishment's previous Beer, Wine, and Liquor license expired in June 2026 because the required tax clearance documentation was not transmitted to the Board in a timely manner by the County and State. He explained that the County tax bill had been paid in February and the State payment had also been made; however, delays in receiving the necessary clearances resulted in the license expiring before the documentation was processed. He reported that the establishment had been operating without a liquor license since June 1, 2026, but subsequently obtained a beer and wine license on August 18, 2026.
Mr. Demetrius stated that the loss of liquor sales had significantly affected the restaurant's revenue, initially reducing business by approximately 60%, with losses remaining at approximately 40%. He explained that many customers visit the establishment to purchase cocktails with their meals but leave when informed that liquor is unavailable. He further stated that the financial strain had forced him to mortgage his home to keep the restaurant operating and separate from several employees or business associates who relied on the establishment for their livelihoods.
Mr. Demetrius requested the restoration of the Beer, Wine, and Liquor license so the restaurant could recover financially and bring back those who had previously relied on the business for employment. He noted that the establishment had begun to experience growth in April, May, and June 2026 before the license issue negatively affected its operations.

11. **t/a Uche's Kitchen,** Uche M. Udemadu Monroe, Managing Member, Nicholas Ekene, Managing Member, for a Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor for the use of Uche Kitchen, LLC., located at 5851 Riverdale Road, Riverdale, 20737. Represented by **Eddie Pounds, Esquire.**

Chief Clark gave a maps presentation.

Mr. Pounds requested amendments to the application as follows:

- Reduce the proposed seating capacity from 99 to 63 seats.
- Change the response regarding the presence of a bar from "No" to "Yes."
- Amend Ms. Udemadu's affidavit to reflect a commitment of 65 to 70 hours per week at the establishment
- Amend Mr. Ekene's affidavit to reflect a commitment of 10 to 20 hours per week, rather than five hours.

Commissioner Norman motions to reflect all changes on the application, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**

After Board vote, the motion carries.

Mr. Pounds advised the Board that he intended to submit additional exhibits in accordance with the applicable 10-day rule. The proposed exhibits included a revised floor plan reflecting the seating capacity and bar area, a menu listing food entrees and proposed alcoholic beverages, a petition containing 15 community signatures, photographs of the restaurant's interior, and letters of support from two neighboring businesses at Riverdale Plaza: Sydney's Burger, located at 5723 Riverdale Road, and JMG Cellular Service, located at 5849 Riverdale Road.

Mr. Pounds explained that Uche's Kitchen proposed to offer Nigerian and Caribbean cuisine to the Riverdale community. He noted that the premises previously housed Queensway Restaurant, which served similar cuisine for many years, and stated that the applicants intended to establish a new operation under different ownership and management.

Mr. Pounds described Ms. Udemadu as a third-generation caterer with decades of hospitality experience who would serve as general manager and oversee daily operations seven days a week. Mr. Ekene would assist with management as needed. He also noted that Ms. Udemadu had completed TIPS certification and that Mr. Ekene expected to complete his certification in the near future.

Mr. Pounds further outlined the applicants' plans to provide monthly hot meals to individuals experiencing homelessness and food insecurity on the last Saturday of each month. He stated that a potential partnership with Manna Food Center was under development to supplement the meals with boxes of staple foods. He also indicated that the applicants intended to implement responsible alcohol service practices, including staff training, age verification, prevention of service to intoxicated patrons, and procedures for addressing security, parking, noise, and other neighborhood concerns.

Ms. Udemadu testified that she had more than 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, having grown up in a family with a background in catering and restaurant ownership. She explained that her business had operated as a catering service for more than six years and that she now intended to establish a sit-down restaurant featuring authentic Nigerian and Caribbean cuisine. She stated that the restaurant was not yet operational but anticipated opening on November 10, 2026.

Ms. Udemadu explained that preparations for the opening included painting, replacing equipment, renovating the bathroom, and improving the premises. She described menu offerings such as suya, kilishi, traditional Nigerian dishes, oxtail, jerk chicken, and rice dishes. She stated that the proposed alcoholic beverage service would complement the food and provide customers with an opportunity to enjoy meals and beverages in a family-friendly environment.

Ms. Udemadu testified that community feedback had been overwhelmingly positive, particularly because there were no Nigerian restaurants within approximately two miles of the location. She noted that former customers of Queensway Restaurant had expressed interest in returning to the premises to enjoy similar cuisine.

Ms. Udemadu confirmed that she intended to apply for a Special Entertainment Permit and understood that a separate hearing would be required for the Board to evaluate that request. She also confirmed that she had completed alcohol awareness training and would ensure that employees responsible for serving alcohol received appropriate certification and ongoing training. She testified that the restaurant expected to begin with four employees, excluding management and family members, and that one employee would be designated to serve alcoholic beverages. She confirmed that the establishment would have policies for checking identification, preventing underage alcohol sales, monitoring patrons for intoxication, and complying with applicable laws and regulations. She acknowledged that she would be jointly liable with Mr. Ekene for violations occurring on the premises and agreed to abide by the Board's rules and regulations.

Mr. Ekene confirmed he had more than 10 years of experience in the restaurant industry. He affirmed that the information in his application and affidavit, as amended, was true and accurate. He further confirmed that he did not hold any other alcoholic beverage licenses in Prince George's County or elsewhere in Maryland. He testified that he would serve as a restaurant manager, overseeing daily operations, staff scheduling, purchasing and inventory, customer service, food quality, cleanliness, and timely service. He would also oversee security, address customer concerns, and help ensure compliance with responsible alcohol service procedures.

Mr. Ekene described the proposed specialty beverages, including Nigerian- and Caribbean-inspired cocktails featuring ingredients such as pineapple, ginger, and rum. He also identified nonalcoholic options, including sobo, a hibiscus and ginger beverage, and a ginger-pineapple drink.

Mr. Ekene stated that he had completed alcohol awareness training and would ensure that employees responsible for serving alcoholic beverages received appropriate training. He also acknowledged his joint liability with Ms. Udemadu for violations occurring on the premises and agreed to comply with the Board's rules and regulations.

Mr. Pounds asked the standard questions typically used to qualify for the Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D's as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. Both applicants were able to answer each question.

Ms. Miranda Shepherd, a member of the community, testified in support of the application.

Mr. Tom, a member of the community, testified in support of the application.

Mr. Martin Tinong, an individual work worked with Ms. Udemadu through her catering services, testified in support of the application.

Mr. Pounds concluded that the testimony and proposed exhibits demonstrated a public need for Uche's Kitchen and its distinctive Nigerian and Caribbean dining experience. He maintained that the applicants had demonstrated their intention to operate responsibly and, in a manner, consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the surrounding community.

12. **t/a The Palms Restaurant & Bar,** Sunny G. Chimezie, Managing Member, Benedict Ijomah, Managing Member, for a Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor, for the use of Nile River Holding, LLC, located at 7729 Finns Lane, Lanham, 20706. Represented by **Benjamin Carter, Esquire.**

Chief Clark gave a maps presentation.

Mr. Carter stated that The Palms Restaurant and Bar opened approximately one year ago following an investment of approximately $1.7 million in renovations. He described the establishment as a valuable addition to the community, located near the New Carrollton Metro station in an area with limited restaurant and business options. The restaurant offers a comprehensive menu featuring Nigerian and other West African dishes, as well as traditional American food options.

Mr. Carter advised that the establishment had previously held an alcoholic beverage license at this location. However, the applicants were unable to renew the license and had been without one since June 1, 2026. He submitted petitions of support containing a total of 21 signatures from customers residing in various locations, including Bowie, Lanham, Silver Spring, Mitchellville, Washington, D.C., and Upper Marlboro. He also referenced favorable online reviews as evidence of the restaurant's growing customer base.

Mr. Carter reported that the restaurant currently employs six individuals, including the two applicants, four of whom are alcohol awareness certified. If the application were approved, the applicants anticipated hiring an additional four to five employees, with all new employees obtaining alcohol awareness certification. He further stated that Mr. Ijama's Alcohol Awareness certification had been submitted to the Board and that Mr. Chimeezi's certification would be provided for the Board's records.

Mr. Carter explained that the absence of an alcoholic beverage license had significantly affected the restaurant's business. When previously licensed, alcohol sales accounted for approximately 15% to 20% of total sales. Since the license expired, the establishment has experienced an estimated 50% decline in overall revenue. He noted that approximately 80% of dine-in customers requested alcoholic beverages with their meals, and some customers left without dining because alcohol was unavailable.

Mr. Carter further emphasized that Palms Restaurant and Bar provides an affordable, full-service dining option, with an average cost of approximately $60 for two people. He noted that customers had praised the restaurant's service and stated that the establishment provided employment opportunities and a safe environment for patrons to experience Nigerian and other West African cuisine.

Mr. Carter advised that one applicant spends at least 30 hours per week at the establishment, while the other spends approximately 40 hours per week on the premises, ensuring that at least one owner is present regularly. He characterized the business as an independently owned and operated establishment supported by a substantial investment in the community.

Mr. Carter asked the standard questions typically used to qualify for the Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor application, including the 6 acceptable forms of I. D’s as well as the ages to sell and consume alcohol. Both applicants were able to answer each question.

Mr. Carter concluded by reiterating that the applicants had previously been found fit and proper by the Board to hold an alcoholic beverage license at this location. He stated that approval of the application would not result in a change to the establishment's previous mode of operation and that the license was necessary to accommodate customer demand.

Results were presented after all scores were tallied.

1) Crab Boat Restaurant (70 pts)
2) Shantoo (60 pts)
3) Uche's Kitchen (40 pts)
4) The Palms Restaurant & Bar (30pts)
5) Taqueria Maria Bonita (0 pts)

Commissioner Norman makes a motion to grant the Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor licenses to the following four entities: Crab Boat Restaurant, Shantoo, Uche's Kitchen and The Palms Restaurant & Bar, seconded by **Commissioner Smith.**
After Board vote, the motion carries.

Adjourned: 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ariana Posada-Mejia

Administrative Aide BOLC