

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

IN THE MATTER OF

Tequila Galore Lounge & Grill
575 N. Colony Street
Meriden, CT 06450
Drew M. Durant, Permittee
Tequila Galore, LLC, Backer
Permit No. LCA.8667

June 1, 2022

SUMMARY SUSPENSION ORDER

This premises operates under a cafe liquor permit issued by the Department of Consumer Protection (“DCP”). It operates under the trade name “Tequila Galore.” The permit was first issued by DCP on a provisional basis on November 23, 2021 and was approved for final permit status on January 6, 2022. The permit is set to expire on November 22, 2022.

We find that on May 30, 2022, Tequila Galore was the scene of a large fight and shooting during which at least one individual was shot and a suspected seven rounds were fired. This incident closely follows two other incidents at or near the premise, specifically a shooting in front of the establishment on May 14, 2022 and a large disturbance that resulted in injuries and required twelve officers to disperse the crowd on March 12, 2022.

Specifically, in a letter to DCP dated May 31, 2022, Meriden Deputy Chief of Police Jerry Scully states that on May 30, 2022 at approximately 1:10 a.m., Meriden police responded to a call of a fight in progress at Tequila Galore with individuals possibly in possession of firearms. A separate call thereafter stated that shots were fired. Meriden police then learned that a gunshot victim had been dropped by car at MidState Medical Center; the victim refused to cooperate because he refused to be a “snitch.” During the police investigation at the premise, Detective Sergeant John Wagner located fresh blood splatter on the left wall and ceiling inside the premise. There was additionally a trail of blood droplets down the patio, off the steps, around the premise, and ultimately ending at the sidewalk in front of the premise. Meriden police also located several shell casings about thirty yards north of the business in an area used for parking by patrons of Tequila Galore, and the upper glass portion of the premise’s front door was shattered. The permittee informed Detective Sergeant Wagner that there was a fight inside the bar between a group of people from Middletown and Meriden preceding the shooting.

Deputy Chief Scully also described an incident that occurred on May 14, 2022 at 1:30 a.m.. Specifically, Meriden police responded to another call of shots fired. The victim had been inside the premise without incident, but while standing in front of the premise, was approached by a man who shot him in the hip and buttocks. Additionally, Deputy Chief Scully explained that on March 12, 2022 at approximately 1:50 a.m., officers were across the street from the premise when they heard a loud verbal disturbance and a sizeable crowd had formed. There was a fight inside the bar that spilled outside. It ultimately took twelve officers to disperse the crowd. Two people were injured during the disturbance, including a man who said he was hit in the face with a bottle while inside the bar, sustaining a serious laceration to his face. Members of the crowd also fought and struggled with police.

As Deputy Chief Scully summarized, “[i]n the 6 months this establishment has been permitted [to operate with a liquor license], we have seen persistent issues with their customers, employees, and received numerous complaints from neighbors. The level of violence has not subsided and in fact, is occurring on a more frequent basis. Gunfire, combined with crowds of patrons, passing vehicles, and a residential/commercial mix is a serious threat to the health, safety, and welfare of everyone.”

A review of DCP records shows four¹ additional pending enforcement cases for this premise, summarized as follows:

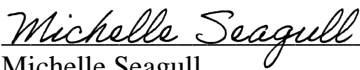
- On May 19, 2022, DCP received a referral from Meriden Fire Marshal John Yacovino concerning crowds at the premise exceeding capacity limits and an abatement order he issued about overcrowding.
- On May 9, 2022, Meriden police responded to a complaint of loud music with patrons inside after hours. Upon arrival, an employee at the front door appeared drunk, closed the door, and locked it on the officers. The officers ultimately were given entry and observed heavy tobacco smoke in the air, hookahs being smoked, and patrons consuming alcohol in the bar.
- On March 18, 2022, Meriden police responded to the premise for being open after hours. Officers could hear loud and audible music, and upon entering observed a large crowd with bartenders behind the counter and beverages on the counter. The permittee initially refused to cooperate with the police or close the bar.
- On March 6, 2022, Meriden police forwarded an anonymous complaint and video purporting to show strippers dancing in the bar and alleging that hookahs and marijuana were allowed.

These cases cumulatively demonstrate that the premise has become a drain on police resources in a short amount of time, and that numerous provisions of the Liquor Control Act are purportedly violated with frequency.

We find that the May 30, 2022 shooting that resulted in an injury, in conjunction with the numerous other police incidents in the brief six month period during which this premise has operated under a café liquor license, demonstrates that the premise is operated in a manner that imperils public safety and highlights the need for better control of the premise by the permittee, backer, or their agents.

Based upon the foregoing, DCP finds that public health, safety and welfare imperatively requires emergency action, in accordance with section 4-182 (c) of the Connecticut General Statutes, and **ORDERS** your cafe liquor permit **suspended immediately and premises closed** pending proceedings for revocation or other action.

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Michelle Seagull
Commissioner of Consumer Protection
Chairperson, Liquor Control Commission

¹ DCP also has an enforcement case for the disturbance that occurred on March 12, 2022.