



East Haven Police Department



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Edward R. Lennon, Jr.
Chief of Police

Patrick Tracy
Deputy Chief of Police

March 12, 2024

Via Email: caitlin.anderson@ct.gov

Caitlin Anderson - Director
State of Connecticut
Department of Consumer Protection
Liquor Control Division
450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 901
Hartford, CT 06103

Re: Summary Suspension Request – Rumba Café, East Haven, CT

Dear Ms. Anderson:

On behalf of Chief Edward Lennon, I am respectfully requesting a “summary suspension” of the Café Liquor license of “Rumba Café Bar and Grill”, located at 679 Main Street, East Haven, CT. Reference permit / credential # LCA. 0007101. The liquor permit was issued/effective date of January 30, 2024. This establishment poses an immediate danger to its customers, the commercial businesses that it adjoins, pedestrians, and vehicular traffic.

On March 10, 2024, at approximately 1:39 a.m. Officer Joseph DiNatale was assigned to a “bar closing” detail on Main Street and he notified dispatch that he heard several gunshots at Rumba Café. Officers arriving on scene observed a large crowd dispersing from the bar and were met with multiple active fights taking place inside the establishment. The gunshots were determined to have been fired while inside the establishment and into the ceiling. No victims were located on scene. Officers quickly developed the identities of two suspects involved in the altercation and detained them while they worked to determine what had transpired.

K9 Officer Donato Palma and his partner K9 Enzo arrived on scene and conducted an evidentiary track. The track led to the discovery of two firearms that were hidden under a trash can on an adjoining property. The firearms were seized by East Haven Police Detectives who quickly determined that both firearms had been reported stolen from another state. Both suspects were placed under arrest and charged accordingly. Both are due to appear in court on March 20, 2024 at G.A. 23, located at 121 Elm Street, New Haven, CT.

This investigation remains open and additional charges are expected.

It should be noted this is the second time the East Haven Police Department is submitting a letter to request a “summary suspension” for Rumba Café. The previous request was sent following another firearms incident that took place at this establishment on October 10, 2021. In summary, a physical altercation occurred inside of Rumba Café and two people involved exited into the parking lot and exchanged gunfire at each other before fleeing the scene. Video of the incident showed several spent shell casings were gathered before they fled, but investigators still located eighteen (18) spent shell casings in the parking lot. At least three uninvolved vehicles were struck by bullets including one that was occupied by an adult female and her infant child. The window of McDonalds was also struck. No victims ever came forward, but one arrest was later made as a result of the investigation.

It should be noted that such instances of violence at Rumba Café are not isolated ones connected with this establishment. There has been a pattern of incidents involving violent behavior, some of which resulted in victims suffering from serious injuries. Below is a summary of the violent incidents over the past few years at Rumba Café to give a small sampling of the ongoing behavior;

- 03/10/2024 Breach of Peace (Unlawful Discharge of Firearm)
- 11/26/2023 Breach of Peace (Fight)
- 10/22/2023 Breach of Peace (Fight)
- 10/15/2023 Assault (Fight)
- 08/06/2023 Assault (Fight)
- 03/26/2023 Breach of Peace (Fight)
- 01/29/2023 Breach of Peace (Fight)
- 12/04/2022 Breach of Peace (Fight)
- 10/22/2022 Breach of Peace (Fight)
- 11/04/2022 Drug Investigation (controlled purchase of narcotics)
- 07/23/2022 Breach of Peace (Unruly large crowd fighting in parking lot)
- 06/20/2022 Breach of Peace (Fight)
- 05/09/2022 Assault (Fight)
- 12/12/2021 Assault (Fight)
- 10/10/2021 Unlawful Discharge of a Firearm (Over 20 shots fired)
- 9/9/2021 Breach of Peace
- 9/9/2021 Assault (Fight)
- 7/25/2021 Assault (Victim suffered broken jaw)
- 7/18/2021 Assault (Victim knocked unconscious)
- 7/4/2021 Assault
- 6/25/2021 Assault (Patron knocked security guard unconscious)
- 5/31/2021 Breach of Peace (Fight)
- 5/23/2021 Breach of Peace
- 4/3/2021 Breach of Peace (Fight)

As a result, the East Haven Police Department (EHPD) assigns officers to “bar closing details”, including for Rumba Café, to closely monitor during closing hours in an effort to deter illegal and/or violent activity. This continued illegal activity at Rumba Café has been a constant drain on police resources and has taken officers away from patrolling other areas of town. Despite these efforts, Rumba Café still has had many violent incidents as outlined above.

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In addition, Rumba Café has had numerous instances in which they violated liquor control laws and regulations. The EHPD has submitted several law enforcement liquor referral complaints to the Liquor Commission in the past. In addition, Rumba Café has repeatedly exceeded the maximum capacity restrictions. One of these liquor referral violations in 2017 resulted in a five (5) day suspension of the liquor permit and a \$3,000 fine. An additional liquor referral was on July 23, 2021 for afterhours sale of alcohol.

It should be noted that in 2017, Rumba Café was found to have 136 patrons within the establishment despite having a maximum capacity of 75 patrons. An arrest was made for Reckless Endangerment, however, the charges were dismissed. A similar incident occurred later in 2017 in which Rumba Café was found to have 143 patrons in the establishment. A second arrest was made for the same charge, however this case was nolle.

We are fortunate to report that there are no known victims for the shots that were fired inside Rumba Café on March 10, 2024. However, it's recognized that this situation could have easily had a different outcome.

Based on the serious violence that has occurred, the threat to public safety, and the drain on police resources, I respectfully request an immediate summary suspension at Rumba Café, located at 679 Main Street, East Haven, CT.

If you need any further information or supporting documentation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Patrick Tracy
Deputy Chief of Police

cc: Chief Edward Lennon, Jr.
Michael Luzzi, Esq. – Town Attorney