

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

IN THE MATTER OF

Dixwell Social Lounge
940 Dixwell Avenue
Hamden, Connecticut
Raymond C. Morris, Permittee
Dixwell Social Lounge, LLC, Backer
Permit No. LCA.8233

November 5, 2020

SUMMARY SUSPENSION ORDER

This premises operates under a café liquor permit issued by the Department of Consumer Protection (“DCP”). It operates under the trade name “Dixwell Social Lounge.” A provisional permit was first issued by DCP on January 31, 2020 and the final permit was approved on March 12, 2020, with the current permit set to expire on May 30, 2021.

We find that during the late evening hours of October 31, 2020 through the early morning hours of November 1, 2020, Dixwell Social Lounge was the scene of a large gathering that violated Governor Ned Lamont’s Executive Orders 7MM, 7PP, 7NNN, & 9D, and corresponding Phase 3 Sector Rules, which were passed in response to the declared COVID-19 public health crisis. The actions of Dixwell Social Lounge thereby created a public health emergency.

Specifically, in a letter dated November 4, 2020, from Hamden Deputy Chief of Police Bo Kicak to DCP Liquor Control Director John Suchy, Deputy Chief Kicak states that Hamden police were dispatched to the premise on reports of a fight in progress. When officers arrived, they noticed a large crowd located in the back of the premise, and numerous people still inside the premise. Officers estimated a crowd of about 500 people were on the scene. Officers noted that people were not social distancing and were not wearing face masks. Additionally, officers observed cars in the parking lot with plates from multiple states, in addition to a large party bus. The parking lot was so full that officers had to close a main road to empty it, which took thirty minutes. As Deputy Chief Kicak summarized, “It was apparent that the owners of this establishment were not enforcing the COVID-19 safety guidelines at all.”

Deputy Chief Kicak’s letter is supported by video that he submitted to DCP. The video, which was provided by the City of New Haven’s Health Director, shows a large party occurring inside the premise and the violation of several Sector Rules. First, numerous people can be seen not wearing face masks in violation of Executive Order 7NNN. Second, people are observed drinking alcoholic beverages without consuming food in violation of Executive Order 7MM and Phase 3 Sector Rules. Third, the crowd is not socially distance in violation of Phase 3 Sector Rules. Fourth, even though only 125 people were allowed in the premise at the time, the premise contained hundreds more people in violation of Phase 3 Sector Rules. Fifth, a DJ can be seen performing, but is not six feet away from the crowd in violation of Phase 3 Sector Rules.

As a result of the activities discovered on the premise by the Hamden police, the Quinnipiac Valley Health District ordered the premise to cease and desist all operations immediately and closed the premise in an order dated November 4, 2020. The order noted the following violations: “(1) Failing to ensure that customers are wearing masks except when dining; (2) Failing to ensure customers remain 6’ apart from each other; (3) Permitting a large gathering inside [the] establishment; (4) Permitting a public health nuisance on your property.”

It does not appear that the November 1, 2020 activity observed by Hamden police is an isolated incident. In his November 4th letter, Deputy Chief Kicak states that “[o]fficers had multiple incidents in the past with the same type of situations, fights breaking out and large crowds.” DCP Liquor Control Division has received at least two complaints from private citizens about the premise. On October 29, 2020, a complainant stated large parties are occurring on a regular basis. The parking lot is “packed,” people are not wearing masks, and based upon the number of people observed coming and going from the premise, social distancing cannot be occurring. On November 2, 2020, a complainant stated that the premise was “packed” and people were not wearing masks.

In sum, as Deputy Chief Kicak stated in his letter: “If the Dixwell Social Lounge continues operation, it will continue to pose an absolute threat to public safety as well as being a constant drain on police resources.”

We find that the November 1, 2020 party and corresponding violations of Executive Orders 7MM, 7PP, 7NNN, & 9D, and corresponding Phase 3 Sector Rules, in conjunction with reports of other similar violations, demonstrates that the premise is operated in a manner that imperils public health, and demonstrates 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 café 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