## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA <br> + + + + + ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE AND CANNABIS BOARD <br> $+++++$ MEETING

IN THE MATTER OF:
Iraklion, LLC
t/a Iraklion
1412 I Street NW : Protest
Retailer CN - ANC 2C : Hearing
License \#116082
Case \# 23-PRO-00078
(Transfer-Location)
:
:

Wednesday January 31, 2024

The Alcoholic Beverage and Cannabis Board met via WebEx videoconference, Chairperson Donovan W. Anderson presiding.

PRESENT:
DONOVAN W. ANDERSON, Chairperson
SILAS GRANT, JR., Member
JAMES SHORT, JR., Member

## ALSO PRESENT:

JOSE ORELLANA, DC ABCA Staff
JOHN FLORITO, Applicant
RICHARD BIANCO, Applicant Counsel
REBECCA STRAUSS, ANC 2C
INVESTIGATOR MARK RUIZ
CHRISTOPHER COHEN, JP Morgan
D'JUAN O'DONALD, JP Morgan
JESSICA FARMER, JP Morgan
ASHLEY WILTSHIRE, Seven Building Associates
TED BROWNFIELD, 15th and $H$ Street Associates LYLE BLANCHARD, Protestant, Group of 5+ ALEXANDRIA SMITH, Protestant, Group of 5+ JOHN BRANCH, 2nd District Commander
TREVOR HEWICK, Witness
FERNANDO RUIZ, Witness
P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S
1:50 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: We're back on the record.

I just want to -- we're back on the record. I want to alert the parties in Case Number 23-PRO-00078, the Iraklion case, that case will start promptly at 3:00 p.m.

So, our next case, Case Number 23-PRO00078, the Iraklion case, that case will start at 3:00 p.m. this afternoon. Sorry for the inconvenience.
(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 1:50 p.m. and resumed at 3:11 p.m.)

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: We're on the record.

Good afternoon, everyone and welcome to the afternoon session of the ABC Board. My name is Donovan Anderson, Chairman of the Board. Joining me this afternoon are two other board members, Mr. James Short and Mr. Silas Grant.

The Board has two -- three members participating today, and that constitutes a quorum.

And so, let me call -- let me go to our calendar. The next case in our -- the only case that we have on our afternoon calendar is Case Number 23-PRO-00078, Iraklion, license number 116082.

Mr. Orellana, can you please elevate the rights of parties in this case?

MR. ORELLANA: Strauss, your access has been elevated. GDL, your access has been elevated. Jessica Bloomfield, your access has been elevated. John Fiorito, your access has been elevated. Joseph Massey, your access has been elevated. Investigator Mark Ruiz, your access has been elevated. Owner, your access has been elevated. Richard Bianco, your access has been elevated.

That is all, Chairman.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. All
right. Can everyone -- everyone who has a camera, can you please turn your camera on?

All right. Good afternoon, everyone. And first and foremost, let me apologize for the lateness of this. This case was supposed to start at 1:30 but, as you see, it's now 3:13 and we are -- I'm calling the case for the first
time.
And it's not because of the tardiness of the Board, it is just based on our calendar today that this case has now been pushed through -- has just been pushed to now 3:14.

Anyway, so let me have -- all right. So, let me have the parties identify themselves for the record. So, let's start with -- oh, that is you, Mr. Bianco? With all that light, I can hardly see you because of the lighting.

MR. BIANCO: Yes, I'm in a different conference room today, and I, unfortunately, am stuck in front of this window because of the outlet situation. So, sorry for that.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. No, because I was just about to say, I didn't see Mr. Bianco. But that's because all the lighting that you have there, I could not recognize you.

So, Mr. Bianco, can you please identify yourself for the record?

MR. BIANCO: Sure, Mr. Chair. My name is Richard Bianco, R-I-C-H-A-R-D, B-I-A-N-C-O. I am counsel for the Applicant. With me, I have John Fiorito, he is our corporate representative for Iraklion, LLC. And I will ask that he
introduce himself and spell his name for the record?

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Go ahead, sir. Where is Mr. Fiorito? Is he online? MR. BIANCO: Yes, he is. Or, at least he was elevated. Oh, I'm sorry, he's having technical issues. So, I will reserve his introduction till he's back on. I think the other parties can introduce themselves.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
Okay. Let's have the --
MR. FIORITO: It's working.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry, who -- go ahead, sir. You can turn your camera on, if you are able. But, please spell and state your name for the record?

MR. FIORITO: I just -- Mr. Chair, I just got audio working. My name is John Fiorito.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Spell your name for the record, please?

MR. FIORITO: First name is J-O-H-N, last name is F-I-O-R-I-T-O.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So, let's have -- all right, so is anyone from the ANC here?

Can you please identify yourself for the record?

MS. STRAUSS: Sure. My name is
Rebecca Strauss, I represent the ANC 2C.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Spell your name, please, ma'am?

MS. STRAUSS: R-E-B-E-C-C-A, S-T-R-A-U-S-S.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. Let's have the -- who is representing the abutting property owner?

MS. FARMER: Chairman -- or afternoon. Jessica Farmer of Holland and Knight on behalf of the abutting property owner, JP Morgan.

MR. COHEN: And Christopher Cohen also of Holland and Knight on behalf of the abutting property owner, JP Morgan.

MS. FARMER: And with us is also our client representative, D'Juan O'Donald.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Where is -- is Mr. O'Donald there? He can spell and state his name for the record?
(Simultaneous speaking.)
MS. FARMER: We can --
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, please.

MS. FARMER: Sure.
MR. O'DONALD: Sure. D'Juan O'Donald, spelled D-apostrophe-J-U-A-N, O-apostrophe-D-O-N-A-L-D.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Good afternoon, sir.

All right. And then, who is representing the group of five or more?

MR. BLANCHARD: Good afternoon, Chairman Anderson. It's Lyle Blanchard of Greenstein, DeLorme, and Luchs. And with me is my co-counsel, Alex Smith -- Alexandria Smith. And we have four of our witnesses with us today. Oh, so my name is spelled L-Y-L-E, B-L-A-N-C-H-A-R-D.

MS. SMITH: And good afternoon, Mr. Chairman. Alexandria Smith, A-L-E-X-A-N-D-R-I-A, Smith, S-M-I-T-H.

MR. BLANCHARD: And with us, we have Ashley Wiltshire.

MS. WILTSHIRE: Yes. Good afternoon. I represent Seven Building Associates and my name is spelled A-S-H-L-E-Y, W-I-L-T-S-H-I-R-E. Thank you.

MR. BLANCHARD: And Mr. Ted

Brownfield.
MR. BROWNFIELD: Yes, hi. Good afternoon. My name is Ted Brownfield, I represent 15 and H Street Associates. And my name is spelled T-E-D, last name is $B-R-O-W-N-F-$ I-E-L-D.

MR. BLANCHARD: And we also have Mr. Trevor Hewick.

MR. HEWICK: Good morning, Mr.
Chairman. My name is Trevor Hewick, Trevor is spelled T-R-E-V-O-R, Hewick is spelled H-E-W-I-CK. And I'm a witness for JDL.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, thank you. Have I --

MR. BLANCHARD: One more.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry.
MR. BLANCHARD: Chairman Anderson, I'm sorry. One more person, and that's John Branch.

MR. BRANCH: Yes. Good afternoon, sir. My name is John Branch, that's J-O-H-N, B-R-A-N-C-H. I'm a formal commander of the Second District.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. Good afternoon. Have we had the -- has everyone identified themselves -- I know I haven't called
you, Mr. Ruiz. But from the Applicant or the protestants, have they all identified themselves for the record?

All right --
MR. BLANCHARD: I believe so. We also have two other witnesses, but I don't know if the ANC has appeared yet, or Mr. Terry Lynch from the Downtown Cluster of Congregations. I don't know if they're online yet.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, 1 know -well, Ms. Strauss has entered the ANC, as a party representative, has identified themself. So, we're fine. I just want to make sure that all the parties have identified themselves for the record.

And Mr. Ruiz, can you please identify yourself for the record?

INVESTIGATOR RUIZ: ABCA Investigator Mark Ruiz, M-A-R-K, R-U-I-Z.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, thank you.

As you see, it appears that there are three protestants and we would be -- we're scheduled to have a significant amount of witnesses today.

And this is not a hearing, I believe, that we can truncate. So, what the Board is going to do, and I'm hoping that everyone's schedule is to accommodate this, is that we're going to -- we're going to convene this hearing on February 23 at 10:00 o'clock.

And so, we'll have the entire day that we can -- we'll start at 10:00 and we'll finish this hearing -- but, first, we'll take a break. But, that's the only way, I think, that we can accommodate, in the sense that we can have this hearing, have all parties testify, and have the entire day without having to -- there's -Friday, February 23 is -- first and fore, the Board was not even supposed to work that week, because it's a holiday week. And so, we are making ourselves available on a Friday at 10:00 o'clock, to accommodate -- to ensure that we have a full day where all parties will be, can be available to testify.

I know that, what's being proposed, if there's some scheduling concerns, I mean, the Board is willing to -- if the parties agree to take witnesses out of order on that day. But, that's what's been proposed, because there's no
way we can do this hearing today starting at 3:00 o'clock, and to be mindful of everyone's time.

We have convened hearings till 2:00 o'clock in the morning, but $I$ don't believe this -- this is not a case that we should be convening at 2:00 o'clock in the morning. I think everyone, we should be up at 10:00 o'clock in the day so we can have everyone's attention, so we can give this case the full attention that is required.

MR. BIANCO: That works for the Applicant. Thank you very much, Mr. Anderson, for making yourselves available on a week you didn't otherwise have to work. And certainly to the Board's counsel, who has been spinning a lot of plates for, at least, the last hour. So, thanks. We're available, we'll be ready to go then.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Blanchard?
MR. BLANCHARD: I've been able to talk to at least four out of the five -- I haven't heard from Mr. Lynch. But, we also appreciate the Board's accommodation, especially on a Friday on a holiday week. And we will be prepared to go forward on that day.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And I will also say, Mr. Blanchard, it is my birthday week. So, it is my birthday week and I am working on my birthday week. At least I'm not working on my birthday, but it's my -- so, I'm just letting you know that it's the --
(Laughter.)
MR. BLANCHARD: I understand. I completely understand and I do not -- I will reassure you, personally, that we do not intend to go until 2:00 a.m. in this case, or nowhere near there.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. And Ms. Strauss?

MS. STRAUSS: Yeah, that works for me.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, that's fine. I'm not sure if the parties were listening to our administrative -- our legal agenda -- today. There were several motions, and I guess I can -- the Board can, on the record at least, address the motions that were filed. So the parties -- I'm going to do some background and just give you the rationale regarding the Board's ruling this morning on our legal agenda, regarding the motions.

And so, let me just -- so, I will just let you know where we are regarding the motions that were filed. The decisions were issued, but I'll give the rationalization for how the Board came to its decision regarding the motions.

And so, this matter comes before the Board on a protest of an application to transfer license from safekeeping to a new location. The license is held by Iraklion, retailer class CN, license number 116082, located at 1412 I Street Northwest, and the Applicant is represented by Richard Bianco. The license has a nude endorsement and a Summer Garden endorsement.

The interior occupancy is 1,200 with seating of 675 patrons. The summer garden seats 65 patrons, with total occupancy load of 100. The hours of operation are Sunday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m., Friday and Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m.

By way of background, the Board's record reflects the following. The license have been in safekeeping since October 1, 2012. The license application was placarded on August 18, 2023. ANC 2B, represented by Chairperson Michael Shankle, filed a protest on September 23 -- I'm
sorry, September 29, 2023.
A second protest was filed by a group of five or more individuals on September 11 -September 21, 2023, represented by Lyle Blanchard Esquire.

A third protestant, the property owner, was filed in September 29 by JP Morgan Chase, as an abutting property owner. And they were represented by Jessica Farmer and Christopher Cohen of Holland and Knight.

Two of three protestant groups were granted standing at the roll call hearing on October 24. The protest of the third protestant, the group of five or more, was originally dismissed at roll call, and subsequently reinstated by the Board. All parties were in attendance at the status hearing on November 8.

On December 6, 2023, the Board ruled on the number of pleadings and cross-pleadings. The result of which was that no protestant was dismissed. But, in Board Order number 23-PRO00078, the Board limited the protest issues raised by ANC 2 C to peace, order, and quiet.

On January 19, 2024, the protestants filed a joint motion to dismiss the applicant, or
in the alternative, grant summary denial.
The Applicant filed its opposition on January 29, 2024 and the protestants filed a reply last night.

All of these pleadings were considered by the Board earlier today on its legal agenda. The Board, in denying the protestant's joint motion to dismiss, for the following reasons.

And this is why I wanted to -- I want the parties to know why the Board ruled earlier to dismiss the motion.

The Board rejects the argument filed by -- filed -- that any failure to comply with 405.1 is fatal to the application. To the extent that 405.1 application included in the transfer application is not satisfactory, any failure to comply with 405.1 is not fatal where, one, the 405.1 application can be amended and supplemented prior to approval.

Two, 405.1 approval is subject to the discretion of the Board and does not have to be resolved at the protest.

Three, 405.1 provides no specifics as to the form of the bonafide agreement.

Therefore, the Board will resolve this issue by
instructing the licensing department to obtain an appropriate affidavit, signed by the Applicant and the building owners, to the requirements of section 405.1, and any supporting documentation necessary to amend and supplement the application, including additional agreements by the Applicant to the building ownership.

Upon submission, this will render all objections to the application under 405.1 moot.

Two, the Board rejects the allegation that the Applicant made a false statement. The zoning certification does not contain a false statement.

Even if the protestant's argument is correct that the zoning certificate contains incorrect information, the protestant's argument confutes being wrong, missing information, or an incorrect issuance by the government with lying.

Therefore, one cannot fairly attribute any error, even if one exists, to the Applicant under 2540.1.

Finally, the Applicant has not cited authority that would bar a nightclub license, or nightclub license with nude dancing in a D6 Zone, even if additional licenses, permits, or
exceptions need to be obtained from another agency, including additional authority operate a sexually oriented business, which is 405.1(e).

Finally, in accordance with Craig versus D.C. Alcoholic Beverage Control Board 721 A. 2 584, 588, D.C. Court of Appeals 1998, the Board has no authority to overrule or invalidate the zoning certificate issued by the Department of Zoning. As a result, to the extent that there are zoning issues related to the application, these issues need to be raised and resolved by the Department of Zoning. Three --

MR. RUIZ: I'd like to --
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on. Who is speaking?
(Simultaneous speaking.)
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You cannot speak, sir. You can only speak through your attorney. So, if you -- who represents you, sir? MR. RUIZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: The person who was speaking, you can only speak through your attorney, sir. So, you need to contact your attorney, and if your attorney needs to say something then your attorney can speak. But, you
cannot speak, sir, without your attorney, okay? Three, the Board rejects the argument that the Applicant cannot comply with the zoning requirements under 405.1.

The Board rejects the protestant's argument that a nightclub with nude dancing does not comply with the zoning requirements contained in 405.1.

It is satisfactory under 405.1 that the Department of Zoning, or the Board of Zoning Adjustment, could approve the Applicant's business plan, regardless of whether as a matter of right or through the issuance of a license permit, way for acception or similar authorization.

Thus, the Board rejects the protestant's zoning argument because, as long as the Applicant's business model is not explicitly prohibited under the zoning laws and regulations, and it's nightclub and nude dancing plans are plausible, and may be issued under zoning, then this is sufficient under 405.1's zoning requirement.

So, that is basically the rationalization. We'll issue Board Order, but
that is the reasoning why the Board, on its legal agenda this morning, rejected the -- denied the motion filed by the protestant, okay?

And before I adjourn, any questions? And one of the things I'll ask Mr. Blanchard, if it's possible when we reconvene, can you pull the conference table closer to the screen? You are a mile away from the camera, so I cannot --

MR. BLANCHARD: We will sit --
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yeah?
MR. BLANCHARD: Yeah. We'll sit much closer to the camera.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Right. So, if it's possible. Because, you're mile away from us, so I can't -- at least, I would like to see you better when we move through this case. Let me --

MR. BLANCHARD: Let me try something. If I sit here, how's the --

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: It's much better. It's much better than -- it's not ideal, but it's 100 percent better than the way it was before. Because, at least --- before, it was I'm seeing these -- I would say, I'm seeing a stick figure, because you're way out. Okay.

MR. BLANCHARD: Okay. Well, I did get a haircut last weekend, so I want to, you know -I did try to clean up.
(Laughter.)
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You need to move up, then, Mr. Blanchard.

I see on my screen, it says owner.
So, if it says owner, therefore I assume that Mr. Bianco is the person who represents the owner. And Mr. Bianco, is it that -- is there something that you need to say, sir?

MR. BIANCO: There's not. I don't know who the person who's logged in as owner, or if he is my client --

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I don't know -well --

MR. BIANCO: But, Mr. Fiorito's our -oh, it's -- yeah, that's one of our witnesses. That's Fernando Ruiz.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So, you have to speak through Mr. Bianco, sir. All right? So, if you want to call mister -- if you need to raise something, you can call Mr. Bianco. I'll give you a minute for you and him to consult, and then I can address it.

MR. BIANCO: Yeah. He's just my client, I'll chat with him offline -- I'm sorry, not my client, my witness. I'll chat with him offline.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Any questions before $I$ recess this matter?

I really appreciate your understanding. But, as stated before, we plan to have this matter addressed, and so we will have this hearing on February 23 at 10:00 o'clock.

And so, we'll have the entire day to ensure that all the issues are addressed, and all of the witnesses will be taken. And so, therefore, we -- for us not to truncate this hearing moving forward. Okay?

If there are no -- any questions, before I adjourn?

MR. BLANCHARD: Nothing from me --
MR. BIANCO: Not from the group of five. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Mr.
Bianco said no. Ms. Farmer -- you have no question, Ms. Farmer, and Mr. Cohen, and Ms. Strauss.

Thank you for your understanding.

But, as I stated before, the Board is making this decision because we believe this a case that's very important. All our cases are important but, based on the parties that are involved here, we want to make sure that we -- your arguments have the attention of the Board and that we're not rushing through any testimony, okay? So, thank you very much. And I'll see you on the 23 at 10:00 o'clock.

And so, let me close the record. So, with that I'm going to close the record for the day.

MR. BLANCHARD: Thank you.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, thank you.

As Chairperson for the Alcoholic Beverage and Cannabis Board for the District of Columbia, in accordance with Title Three, Chapter 405, Office of Open Government, I move that ABC Board hold a closed meeting on February 1, 2024 for the purpose of discussing and hearing reports concerning ongoing or planned investigation alleged criminal or civil misconduct, or violations of law or regulations, and seeking legal advice from our legal counsel on the

Board's investigative agenda, legal agenda, and licensing agenda for February 1, as published in the D.C. Register on January 26. Is there a second?

MEMBER SHORT: Mr. Short, I second.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Short has second the motion. I will take a roll call vote on the motion before us, now that it has been second. Mr. Short?

MEMBER SHORT: Mr. Short, I agree.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Grant?
MEMBER GRANT: Mr. Grant, I agree.
CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: As it appears that the motion has passed, $I$ hereby give notice that the ABC Board will hold this closed meeting.

Pursuant to the Open Meetings Act, notice will also be posted on the ABC Board hearing room bulletin board, placed on the electronic calendar on ABCA's website, and published in the D.C. Register in as timely a manner as practical.

Thank you very much have, a great day. And I guess the Board will be back at work at 1:30, I believe, tomorrow afternoon.

Have a great day. I'll now ask all

Board members to return to executive session for further action. Thank you. All right, bye-bye. (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 3:37 p.m.)

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Neal R. Gross and Co., Inc.


## C ERTI FICATE

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In the matter of: Iraklion

Before: DC ABCA

Date: 01-31-24

Place: teleconference
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> Mae $n$ Gors 1. Court Reporter

