

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE AND CANNABIS BOARD
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MEETING

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IN THE MATTER OF: :
 :
Best Stop Dispensary, LLC: :
t/a Best Stop Dispensary : :
3439 14th Street NW : Fact Finding
License No. 129285 : Hearing
 :
(Review of Application :
for a New License with :
Delivery Endorsement) :
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Thursday
February 13, 2025

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

PRESENT:

DONOVAN W. ANDERSON, Chairperson
SILAS GRANT, JR., Member
RYAN JONES, Member
DAVID MEADOWS, Member

ALSO PRESENT:

JOSE ORELLANA, DC ABCA Staff
AZAM AWAD, Licensee
ADANECH GEBREMESKEL, Licensee
SEAN GORDY, DC OAG

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 3:45 p.m.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: The next case
4 on our calendar is a fact-finding hearing for
5 Best Stop Dispensary, license number 129825. I'm
6 hoping that the parties are online.

7 Mr. Orellana, are you able to elevate
8 the rights of the parties for this case?

9 MR. ORELLANA: Azam Awad, your access
10 has been elevated. Adanech Gebremeskel, your
11 access has been elevated.

12 That is all, Chairman.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I thought we
14 were going to have a witness from maybe Mr.
15 Towson. No, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Sean.
16 Our head of licensing.

17 MR. ORELLANA: I don't see him on.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm looking for
19 Mr. Gordy.

20 MR. ORELLANA: I don't see him on.
21 Let me reach out.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm hearing a
23 feedback. I see that there's someone online and
24 there's another name, but there's no picture.
25 Who's the other person? There's a Gebremeskel.

1 Who's that person? Can that person turn their
2 camera on? Are you both in the same location?

3 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Not in the same
4 location as my partner is Azam Awad.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry. I
6 was asking, were you in the same location?

7 MS. GEBREMESKEL: No.

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Do
9 either you have -- ma'am, do you have some
10 headphones you can use?

11 MS. GEBREMESKEL: I don't have any
12 headphones.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Awad, do
14 you have a headphone?

15 MR. AWAD: Yes, sir, I do.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Let me see if
17 it helps.

18 MR. AWAD: Yes, sir. Is this better?

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm hearing a
20 feedback. I'll ask Ms. Gebremeskel why don't you
21 mute your line? Just turn your line on when you
22 need to speak.

23 You can speak, Mr. Awad. Let me see
24 if I can -- speak, sir.

25 MR. AWAD: Good afternoon, Mr.

1 Chairman. My name is Azam Awad.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry?

3 MR. AWAD: Good afternoon, Mr.

4 Chairman and members. My name is Azam Awad.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on a
6 minute. I'm getting some feedback. I was trying
7 to find out how can I -- are you on two lines or
8 are you online and on your phone? I'm just
9 trying to find out -- I see that you are on both
10 online. Is there anyone on the phone? Have you
11 logged in twice or are you just logged in one
12 time?

13 MR. AWAD: No, I have just logged in
14 through the computer system, sir.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
16 Okay. All right. So, let's start. Let's start
17 because time is of the essence. So Mr. Awad, if
18 I pronounced your name correctly, please spell
19 and state your name for the record and your
20 relationship to the establishment.

21 MR. AWAD: Yes, good afternoon. My
22 name is Azam Awad. Spelling is A-Z-A-M, as in
23 Mary. Last name Awad, A-W-A-D. And I am Ms.
24 Adanech's partner at the location at 3439B, 14th
25 Street, Northwest.

1 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So,
2 Ms. Gebremeskel, please spell and state your name
3 for the record and your relationship, please.

4 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Thank you so much
5 for giving us this opportunity. My first name is
6 A-D-A-N-E-C-H. And last name
7 G-E-B-E-R-E-M-E-S-K-E-L, Geberemeskel. I'm a
8 partner with Azam Awad, the location 43439, 14th
9 Street, Northwest.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
11 Hold on one minute, please.

12 MR. ORELLANA: Just confirming, we
13 need Mr. Gordy on the public hearing, correct?

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, the
15 hearing for this matter, yes.

16 MR. ORELLANA: Correct. Now, let Mr.
17 Gordy -- Ms. Gebremeskel, please mute your line.
18 Only unmute yourself when you're speaking. Mr.
19 Gordy needs to be in the public hearing, in the
20 public meeting for this case, not the executive.

21 All right, let me -- while I'm waiting
22 for Mr. Gordy, so let me ask a question, Mr.
23 Awad.

24 MR. AWAD: Yes, sir.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You said -- you

1 stated that you and Ms. Gebremeskel, that you're
2 partners in the Best Stop Dispensary. So, can
3 you tell me -- tell me about your business,
4 please.

5 MR. AWAD: Yes, sir. So, Best Stop
6 Dispensary, we're partnering up in order to open
7 up a licensed dispensary in Washington, D.C. to
8 be able to provide all the different cannabis
9 cures for people in the Washington region and
10 also be able to, you know, provide advice and
11 ways for people to be able to obtain their
12 licensed medical cards. And this is why we are
13 joining forces in order to try to provide this
14 service for the public.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And when did
16 you apply for a license?

17 MR. AWAD: Initially, actually, Ms.
18 Ms. Gebremeskel applied for the license, I
19 believe, during the July open period.

20 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, I can ask
21 her when she --

22 Ms. Gebremeskel, when did you apply
23 for a license then?

24 MR. AWAD: And I'll mute myself for
25 the record.

1 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Please, yes.

2 MS. GEBREMESKEL: I applied for the
3 license July 1st in the beginning of the -- when
4 the license is open. I'm the first applicant to
5 submit the application and approved as a standard
6 medical cannabis application.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so, when
8 you applied -- when you applied, who was on the
9 application? Who were the owners?

10 MS. GEBREMESKEL: In the beginning, in
11 July 1st, there was two partners, me, Adanech
12 Gebremeskel, and Hurity Araya. And the placard
13 is issued.

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, how much --
15 what was -- what percentage did you own and what
16 percentage did the other individual own?

17 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Fifty-fifty percent.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Fifty-fifty
19 percent. Okay. So, what happened to the other
20 partner?

21 MS. GEBREMESKEL: As soon as after the
22 placard is issued and the payment is done at that
23 point, Hurity Araya, she would like to withdraw
24 based on her personal problem. She don't want to
25 continue with me on the license.

1 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. So, as
2 soon as -- so at what point -- I'm sorry, at what
3 point did she withdraw?

4 MS. GEBREMESKEL: At the time of the
5 placard card payment.

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so, what
7 did you do after that?

8 MS. GEBREMESKEL: I asked her just the
9 placard is ready to be posted and we have to pay
10 the payment and have to post it on the location.
11 She innocently told me she don't want to continue
12 this whole process no more because she have
13 something personal problem on her personal life.

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so -- so
15 she -- she was no -- she no longer is interested
16 in pursuing this business, correct?

17 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so, what
19 did you do regarding ownership?

20 MS. GEBREMESKEL: As soon as she
21 withdraw, I pay the whole \$8,000 payment and I
22 got the issue on the placard. And I posted on
23 4600 14th Street, the location which is I am a
24 tenant still today. And I posted on that
25 location.

1 But in the meantime, you know, I was
2 planning to open on that location, 4600 14th
3 Street as a cafe and pizzeria place. That was my
4 beginning dream. So, as soon as the placard is,
5 I posted because the address was qualified,
6 everything's okay.

7 I changed my mind and sent email to
8 ABCA in the cannabis department. Can I change my
9 standard application to conditional? They told
10 me, yeah, you can change your standard
11 application to conditional and whenever you got
12 any location, you can use it anytime.

13 So, I was a dream to open a cafe in
14 4600 14th Street. So, I changed my mind as soon
15 as I got the confirmation from ABCA, Cannabis
16 Department I changed my application, standard
17 application to conditional license and I am now
18 still continue my cafe in 4600 14th Street.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But on the
20 application itself, when you changed it from
21 standard to conditional, did you change the
22 ownership? I can't hear you, ma'am.

23 MS. GEBREMESKEL: At that point, when
24 I changed my license to from standard to
25 conditional, I was 100 percent ownership. So, I

1 just changed it and ABCA, Cannabis Department
2 accepted my conditional application. So, 100
3 percent ownership and it's changed to conditional
4 license.

5 And at the meantime, when the -- after
6 I changed my license to conditional, I meet with
7 Azam. He's a good person working. I decided to
8 work with him. And when I -- when I asked him,
9 he has a location. He has a good location to
10 move to any conditional license. So, I -- we
11 agreed to work together. So, we applied in 3439
12 14th Street. And we got the fact-finding hearing
13 today.

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So,
15 the reason you have a fact-finding hearing is
16 because there's confusion over ownership. That's
17 the purpose of the fact-finding hearing. But did
18 you -- did you form -- did you file -- did you
19 file any documents with the agency to say that
20 -- but let me ask you a question. What type of
21 business entity did you own with Ms. -- your
22 previous partnership? What type of business
23 relationship was that? I can't hear you, ma'am.

24 MS. GEBREMESKEL: It's one.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

1 When you applied, you got the standard license
2 and which was moved to conditional. But the, the
3 license that was issued to you, you own 50
4 percent and your partner owned 50 percent. Is
5 that correct?

6 MS. GEBREMESKEL: No.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: When did you --
8 when did you -- when did you change your
9 ownership relationship with the agency, ma'am?

10 MS. GEBREMESKEL: She changed her mind
11 at the time of placard issued. I changed my mind
12 and the ownership is --

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: No, I'm sorry.
14 All right. Did you -- did you ever reach out to
15 the agency to say that you were 100 percent owner
16 of the business? You want to change your
17 ownership status? Did you ever do that?

18 MS. GEBREMESKEL: What I did -- let me
19 explain what I did at, in my knowledge. As soon
20 as I decided to change the license from standard
21 conditional, the agency accepted my -- my
22 opinion. You can do it in conditional. What I
23 did is, I got a permission. I can change my
24 license to conditional so --

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: No, no, no,

1 listen.

2 MS. GEBREMESKEL: I keep the
3 ownership.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yeah, go ahead.
5 Go ahead now. Go ahead.

6 MS. GEBREMESKEL: The ownership, I
7 only informed the agency when Azam is coming to
8 as a partner. I put all information, Azam's
9 information, everything, his information,
10 personal information, his social, every
11 information I submit to the agency in the
12 meantime, at the time of when I meet Azam.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. So, when
14 did you advise the ownership? I'm sorry, when
15 did you advise the agency? And how did you
16 advise the agency that the -- I'm sorry, what is
17 her name?

18 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Azam.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: No. Previous
20 partner.

21 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Hurity.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes. What's
23 her name?

24 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Hurity. Hurity.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Spell that for

1 me, please. Spell her name.

2 MS. GEBREMESKEL: H-I-R-I-T-Y.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What's her --
4 is that her -- what's her full name?

5 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Hირity Araya,
6 A-R-A-Y-A. Her last name.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So,
8 when did you, when did you change the ownership
9 of the business with ABCA?

10 MS. GEBREMESKEL: At the time of when
11 I am a partnership with Azam.

12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And when was
13 that?

14 MS. GEBREMESKEL: When, when I applied
15 --when I applied to the new location with Azam.
16 That time -- that time is now in end of December,
17 I think.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, you -- what
19 information did you provide to the agency?

20 MS. GEBREMESKEL: All Azam
21 information, my partner information, personal
22 information, his -- we -- I just submit
23 everything, the whole documents, the whole
24 package. What I fill out in the beginning, I
25 fill out for Azam again.

1 50/50 percent discount, I put on the
2 summary page. Adanech 50 percent, Azam 50
3 percent. I put all his information at the time
4 of application to standard when at the time of
5 change of my license in general.

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So
7 does Ms. -- I'm sorry, what's her name again?
8 I'm sorry.

9 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Adanech.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Ms. Adanech,
11 did you -- did you sign any paperwork with her
12 officially ending her relationship with your --
13 that you are no longer in business?

14 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Did you provide
16 that to the agency?

17 MS. GEBREMESKEL: I don't know, I'm
18 just getting fact hearing meeting, just I'm
19 attending. I don't know which document is
20 required or not.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: No, I'm just
22 asking you, ma'am, have you provided any
23 documents to the agency to say that she is no
24 longer your partner, that you are -- that she's
25 no longer your partner.

1 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Only for, yes -- the
2 only form I submitted is there is a standard
3 summary of share form in the agency. Every
4 shareholder have to be completed summary of
5 share. Whoever the partner have to completed the
6 summary of share document, I completed that form
7 properly submitted to the agency. Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Gordy, can
9 you come on camera, please?

10 MR. GORDY: Actually, in the middle of
11 a move, but I'm here.

12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I need you, Mr.
13 Gordy. So, I should have been informed that you
14 were needed for this. I know that you -- we
15 decided this morning that we needed your
16 testimony this afternoon.

17 MR. GORDY: I'm here, sir.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Can
19 you state and spell your name for the record,
20 sir?

21 MR. GORDY: Sean Gordy.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So,
23 you have, all right, so you have a conditional
24 license. And you have now -- you have identified
25 a location. And so, you have requested from the

1 -- you have now informed the agency that you have
2 a location to open your business. And what's the
3 location that you have identified, ma'am?

4 MS. GEBREMESKEL: 7439 14th Street,
5 NW.

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And Mr. Awad is
7 your 50 percent partner in this -- now in this
8 business to move into this location, is that
9 correct?

10 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Awad, I'm
12 sorry, if I pronounced your name wrong, please
13 forgive me, sir. Is there anything that you want
14 to add, sir? You can unmute yourself and do that,
15 sir.

16 MR. AWAD: Yes, sir. So, everything
17 that Ms. Adanech said I was already informed of
18 this prior, her situation with the old partner
19 that is no longer existing. And she brought the
20 opportunity over to me.

21 I was already in the middle of a
22 contract for the 3439 location, which I was
23 getting ready to lose because of license issues.
24 I was not going to move forward with that
25 location until Ms. Adanech explained to me the

1 situation that she was going through. And I
2 offered to, you know, to be her partner with that
3 and to also use this location instead of
4 forfeiting it.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right,
6 thank you.

7 All right, Mr. Gordy, let me go back
8 to you, sir. So, just tell me, what is your
9 relationship with ABCA, sir?

10 MR. GORDY: I'm sorry. I'm the Chief
11 Licensing Officer in the licensing division.

12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, are you
13 familiar with this establishment, this
14 conditional licensed Best Stop dispensary?

15 MR. GORDY: I am.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And how are you
17 familiar with this establishment, sir?

18 MR. GORDY: We received an application
19 for and from Best Stop, specifically the entity
20 Addis Ababa, Inc.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Gordy, is
22 there any way you can just -- I need you to be
23 stable because you're losing -- I need you to
24 just pull over because I'm losing you, sir.

25 MR. GORDY: I did. Yeah, I did. And

1 then that's when the signal was lost, like it is
2 now. And so, it goes in and out. That's why I
3 try to move to a different location.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, so
5 what problems, if any, does your division have
6 with this license?

7 MR. GORDY: So, Best Stop, Addis
8 Ababa, Inc., submitted an application and, as the
9 witness testified, it was placarded as a standard
10 application with location. The witness contacted
11 -- can you still hear me?

12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, I can hear
13 you, sir.

14 MR. GORDY: Okay. The witness
15 contacted the licensing specialist, the assigned
16 specialist, to let her know that the partner, as
17 the witness stated, withdrew and that the
18 location in which they were placarded for was
19 lost. I believe there was some disagreement or
20 separation with the landlord.

21 So, the Addis Ababa, Inc., or Best
22 Stop, as it was trading as, did not withdraw the
23 application but did request to have it converted
24 to conditional. That's the last the specialist
25 and ABCA heard from Addis Ababa. Somewhere on

1 July 1st, the entity headed by, or being
2 represented by Mr. -- your other witness filed an
3 application with a new location and the
4 application was accepted.

5 Or, at that time, when the Addis Ababa
6 application was converted and then the licensee
7 or your witness returned to ABCA saying that
8 there was a new entity, new partnership, and new
9 location, then that's when the licensing
10 specialist flagged and alerted management to
11 pause the application because the original Addis
12 Ababa application was not properly withdrawn.

13 There was no transfer of ownership in
14 terms of if the original two owners were on the
15 application and one owner removed herself and
16 then your witness absolved the other 50 percent
17 to where she now owned 100 percent. We were not
18 aware of that.

19 And in addition to that, the entity in
20 which she represents she owns 100 percent of now,
21 is not the applicant and not even the same
22 trading organization, but a different applicant
23 now that's being represented by Mr. Azam, who is
24 your second witness today.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But what -- my

1 confusion though, Ms. -- I'm sorry, Ms.
2 Gebremeskel stated that she has a conditional
3 license. So, what entity -- as far as license is
4 concerned, what entity owns the conditional
5 license? Is that correct?

6 MR. GORDY: That's correct. So, if --
7 and hence the request for the fact-finding,
8 because if she's saying that the -- she now owns
9 100 percent of the original applying entity, that
10 being Addis Ababa, Inc., but then saying that
11 that entity no longer exists, then therein lies
12 our confusion and concern.

13 And then to then reappear with another
14 partner, that being the gentleman that's your
15 second witness today and applying for a license,
16 then in theory, this gentleman also applied for a
17 license in which the second entity is under a
18 different partnership.

19 And this has now changed to -- that's
20 when it changed to Best Stop, which originally
21 was under a different entity then. Where did the
22 first entity go? And if it's a conditional
23 license, then that license has to be resolved or
24 that status of condition has to be resolved with
25 the original applying entity if she is to move

1 into a second entity.

2 Otherwise, she's asking us to issue
3 one conditional license for the old entity, Addis
4 Ababa, which no longer exists from what I've
5 told. And then secondly, the second entity in
6 which she's a partner of with Mr. Azam Awad.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So how many
8 conditional licenses are out there who have been
9 issued by the agency to --

10 MR. GORDY: One.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: -- to these two
12 parties? And the conditional license was issued
13 to what entity?

14 MR. GORDY: Addis Ababa. Addis Ababa.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So who is -- so
16 who is -- so why are having a fact finding
17 hearing on Best Stop Dispensary? Who is -- what
18 is Best Stop Dispensary?

19 MR. GORDY: That's what we'd like to
20 find out, sir.

21 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on, ma'am.
23 Go ahead, sir.

24 MR. GORDY: Right. Because when your
25 witness resurfaced, because she didn't mention

1 Harity Araya, who was representing the Addis
2 Ababa entity, which was the Addis Ababa
3 incorporated entity, was originally trading as
4 Organic Dispensary.

5 And that's what your witness is
6 representing along with the partnership that was
7 dissolved. So it was the Addis Ababa Inc.
8 trading as Organic Dispensary that she absorbed
9 and the remaining 50 percent requested a
10 conditional license because they lost the
11 location. And so, that license is in conditional
12 status as we stand.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So,
14 the -- I'm sorry, what's the name of the license
15 that's in conditional status?

16 MR. GORDY: It is Addis Ababa Inc.
17 trading as Organic Dispensary.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: That is a
19 conditional license. And who are the owners, as
20 far as ABCA is concerned? Who are the owners of
21 Organic Dispensary?

22 MR. GORDY: We had Harity Araya, whom
23 your witness mentioned, was 50 percent owner, as
24 well as the witness. We were notified that
25 Harity, the other partner, fell off by somehow.

1 I don't know if they -- I guess the witness
2 explained the story.

3 But we were notified that that person
4 was no longer a part of the entity and that they
5 wanted to assume the 50 percent and convert it to
6 a conditional because that entity also lost their
7 location.

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So,
9 has the agency approved giving Ms. Gebremeskel as
10 a 100 percent owner of Organic Dispensary?

11 MR. GORDY: I believe so, yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, she owns
13 100 percent of Organic Dispensary and this
14 dispensary is -- and this is a conditional
15 license, is that correct, because there's no
16 location?

17 MR. GORDY: That's correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
19 Okay. So, now, does Best Stop Dispensary have a
20 license?

21 MR. GORDY: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What is Best
23 Stop Dispensary from the agency's perspective?

24 MR. GORDY: They submitted an
25 application on July 1st for, I believe, a

1 location. I don't have the placard in front of
2 me, but I don't believe it's placarded. The
3 witness can speak to that.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So,
5 Best Stop Dispensary applied for a license. And
6 who were the owners of Best Stop Dispensary as
7 far as the agency is concerned?

8 MR. GORDY: Well, when they submitted
9 their application, on the application for the
10 entity was Azam Awad, whom I believe is your
11 second witness, and the first witness that you
12 have. And so when they submitted that -- when
13 they

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Ms.
15 Gebremeskel. So you're saying Ms. Gebremeskel
16 submitted -- as far as she submitted -- she and
17 Mr. Awad submitted an application July 1st as 50
18 percent owners of this Best Stop Dispensary. Is
19 that correct?

20 MR. GORDY: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And what is the
22 agency's problem with this?

23 MR. GORDY: That the witness, the
24 first witness, wanted to -- my understanding, our
25 understanding is that they wanted to use the Best

1 Stop license with the new entity and new
2 partnership in lieu of the original Addis Ababa
3 Organic Dispensary license, in which we had
4 questions about how her going into another
5 partnership, new location, etc.

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, what is it
7 -- what is the agency's concern?

8 MR. GORDY: All right. Our concern is
9 that if the applicant -- what happened to the
10 original entity, and if the applicant was still
11 pursuing the first license, and has she totally
12 absolved herself from the original license, and
13 then now has joined partnership with the second
14 license or second application, Mr. Awad, and are
15 they moving forward with the second entity
16 dissolving the first entity.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But let me ask
18 a question, though. Can Ms. Gebremeskel -- can
19 she own -- can she have ownership, at least 50
20 percent ownership in two entities?

21 MR. GORDY: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, why is
23 there a concern? If -- okay, she has a
24 conditional license. She is not applying -- and
25 maybe if I'm incorrect, please let me know. She

1 has a conditional license for Organic Dispensary,
2 and now that's conditional. She's applying as --
3 she's applying for a license under Best Stop
4 Dispensary. I don't understand why there is any
5 confusion.

6 I mean, if she's -- I can't understand
7 if she was trying to apply for a -- yeah, I'm
8 confused. Is she trying to resurrect the Organic
9 Dispensary? Is she trying to -- how is she
10 trying to resurrect the Organic Dispensary?

11 MR. GORDY: Well, I'm not nodding yes.
12 I'm just kind of affirming that that's sort of
13 our confusion, and that's why we wanted to --
14 when we received the second application that we -
15 - when it came to the board, I don't think that
16 she was clear about what she was doing.

17 And, you know, rather than think it
18 was something nefarious going on, we wanted to
19 have a conversation with her as well as the other
20 party, the second entity, to see exactly what it
21 was they were doing.

22 Because if they were now moving into
23 the second entity and bring in Best Stop, then is
24 she then foregoing the first entity, Addis Ababa,
25 and was she clear about what she was doing?

1 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So,
2 Ms. Gebremeskel, what entity did you form to get
3 into a real -- what entity did you -- what entity
4 are you -- did you agree to join with Mr. Awad?

5 MS. GEBREMESKEL: In the beginning, my
6 company was Addis Ababa, Inc. That's correct.
7 And then when at the time of -- then my partner
8 is Azam, because I tried to move the entity,
9 trade name, everything, based on Best Stop
10 Dispensary, an LLC company and trade name.

11 I have the trade name. I revised the
12 article of organization between -- which shows
13 Azam and me, 50 percent ownership. I changed the
14 revision. We have an amendment on article of
15 organization. So, I moved to -- you know, in the
16 same Best Stop Dispensary, LLC and Best Stop
17 Dispensary.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So,
19 your -- all right. So, are you -- are you asking
20 the organization -- are you -- do you still have
21 -- does Organic Dispensary still exist?

22 MS. GEBREMESKEL: No, because, you
23 know, there is possibilities in dispensary
24 department you can -- you have a right to change
25 your corporation. You have a right to change

1 your trade name. There is a form. I completed
2 that form and submitted to cannabis department.
3 There is always whenever somebody did any change,
4 there is a form. I do, all the forms change.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. So, you
6 have changed your name from Organic Dispensary to
7 Best Stop Dispensary and you now have that both
8 you and Mr. Awad are the 50 percent owners of
9 this new entity, Best Stop Dispensary. Is that
10 what you're saying?

11 MS. GEBREMESKEL: That's correct.

12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And Organic
13 Dispensary no longer exists.

14 MS. GEBREMESKEL: We registered
15 already Best Stop Dispensary. We don't need no
16 more use Organic Dispensary. Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so -- and
18 I guess I would need to find from Mr. -- so, did
19 the agency -- did you receive a conditional
20 license for Best Stop?

21 Well, I guess -- I guess what you're
22 saying is that you've changed -- you've
23 reorganized -- you've changed from Organic to --
24 you've changed from Organic to Best Stop and so,
25 therefore, Best Stop is the entity that now owns

1 the conditional license. Is that what you're
2 saying? And you have provided ABCA with the new
3 ownership of the new entity.

4 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Correct. I agree.
5 That's a correct thing. Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay.

7 Mr. Gordy, are you -- are you there,
8 Mr. Gordy?

9 MR. GORDY: I'm here, Mr. Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Are you not --
11 do you know -- do you understand -- do you
12 understand what was presented here today?

13 MR. GORDY: I do. I do. And she's
14 provided the clarity that we need.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. All
16 right. Well, that was the issue, ma'am. Thank
17 you for being here today. You have provided the
18 clarity and the -- this was the fact finding here
19 to get some clarification regarding ownership.
20 The agency will move forward with processing your
21 application, whatever that means.

22 That doesn't mean you're going to get
23 -- you're going to get a license. It just says
24 that the agency will move forward in processing
25 your application. Okay. Thank you very much.

1 Have a great day.

2 MS. GEBREMESKEL: Thank you.

3 MR. AWAD: Thank you guys all for your
4 time. We appreciate you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
6 Thank you. All right.

7 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
8 went off the record at 4:27 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Best Stop

Before: DC ABCA

Date: 02-13-25

Place: teleconference

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate complete record of the proceedings.



Court Reporter

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