

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

2 11:01 a.m.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. The
4 next case in our calendar, it's a whole lot,
5 License No. 129362. Mr. Orellana, can you
6 please elevate the rights of the parties in this
7 case.

8 MR. ORELLANA: Sure thing. Cameron
9 Mixon, access elevated; and Aloha, access
10 elevated. That is all, Chairman.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. Good
12 morning, Mr. Mixon. Can you please identify
13 yourself for the record, please?

14 MR. MIXON: Good morning, Mr. Chair.
15 Cameron Mixon, counsel for the applicant, Aloha.
16 C-A-M-E-R-O-N, M-I-X-O-N.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And is your
18 client here this morning, sir.

19 MR. MIXON: Yes. We're joined by the
20 applicant, Saleh Salim.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Good morning.
22 Can you please identify -- please spell and
23 state your name for the record and identify
24 yourself for the record, sir?

25 MR. SALIM: Yes. Good morning. My

1 name is Saleh Salim. That's S-A-L-E-H, last
2 name Salim, S-A-L-I-M.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And you're the
4 owner of this establishment?

5 MR. SALIM: Yes, correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So
7 as, Mr. Mixon, you are aware, it's a fact-
8 finding hearing. On a fact-finding hearing, the
9 parties are not under oath. They're not sworn
10 in. It's more informal. The Board cannot order
11 the licensee to take an action. The Board might
12 ask questions, and the licensee can refuse to do
13 that and there's really nothing that the Board
14 can do. And, also, because the parties will not
15 be sworn in and so, therefore, nothing that you
16 say here can that nothing that you say here can
17 be used against you because you're not on the
18 oath.

19 This establishment, so this is a whole
20 lot. They have applied for a medical cannabis
21 retail license with delivery endorsement. And
22 so there's been some issues with not necessarily
23 with -- some issues with Mr. Salim, and so I'm
24 just trying to find out what involvement because
25 there were some unlicensed establishments that

1 were before this Board. The Board had issued
2 some summary closure and notices. And it
3 appears that Mr. Salim might have had some
4 involvement in some of these other agencies,
5 other establishments. I'm just trying to find
6 out some clarification about what involvement
7 is, and it did Mr. Salim have in, I guess,
8 Tobacco King. Budz and Roses, like, Tobacco
9 King and Budz and Roses, did he have any
10 involvement in these establishments and,
11 specifically, what was his role in these
12 establishments? I mean, you can either have Mr.
13 Salim respond, or you can respond on his behalf
14 as his representative, Mr. Mixon.

15 MR. MIXON: As an initial matter, I've
16 discussed with Mr. Salim his history of business
17 ownership in the District of Columbia.

18 To clarify, there are a variety of
19 Tobacco King establishments within the District
20 of Columbia, some of which either are or have
21 been under Mr. Salim's ownership and some of
22 which have not. The Board may be aware of one
23 that was located on U Street, which was subject
24 to an ABCA enforcement action due to -- which
25 was acquired by Mr. Salim after it had already

1 been in operation. And subsequent to Mr.
2 Salim's acquisition of that business, there was
3 a prior owner of the Tobacco King business was
4 running their own unlicensed online delivery
5 operation under the name of Budz and Roses --

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Mixon, I
7 know you're being an attorney. Okay. The
8 question I'm asking, okay, you either answer the
9 question or let him answer. I don't need to you
10 to give us all the preference. I don't need you
11 to provide me what's being provided. It's a yes
12 or no. Was he involved in it? I mean, he's on
13 the cusp of receiving a license under his own
14 name. Okay. And I don't know that, so I don't
15 know, I don't know if he's been involved. The
16 name, Saleh Salim, it could be a common name.
17 Okay. It could be a common name.

18 So the question I'm asking, is he the
19 Saleh Salim who was involved in these
20 establishments? And just what role is it that
21 he played in these establishments? Because I
22 want to make sure the purpose of this is to
23 ensure -- the purpose of this hearing, if we
24 were to move forward and issue this license,
25 it's that I don't have the pleasure of seeing

1 Mr. Salim again. I see you almost every week,
2 Mr. Mixon, but that is because that's your job.

3 So I don't have a problem seeing you every
4 week. I enjoy seeing you every week because
5 that's your job. However, I don't want to see
6 Mr. Salim again.

7 So I'm just asking questions about is
8 he the Saleh Salim who was involved in these
9 other establishments? And what was his nature
10 of his role? And Mr. Salim, unless your lawyer
11 tells you to answer, you don't answer for your
12 own protection. Okay. So you have a lawyer.
13 He speaks for you. And unless he tells you --
14 you're paying him highly to speak for you, and
15 he's a good attorney. So unless he tells you to
16 speak, please, sir, don't say nothing. Okay.

17 MR. MIXON: I can amend my answer to be
18 a little more brief, Mr. Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr.
20 Mixon. Yes, it is correct that Mr. Salim has
21 owned and does own businesses called Tobacco
22 King. And we'd be happy to elaborate if the
23 Board has specific questions about the history
24 of these businesses.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, I guess

1 what I'm trying to find out is that, because
2 Tobacco King was an unlicensed establishment,
3 and I'm aware that, prior to how some folks have
4 moved into the business, because they were
5 running -- they were formerly I-71 or -- yes.

6 So in order to transit, for some folks,
7 in order to move into this business, an illegal
8 marketplace, you know, we allow some people who
9 are operating illegally. But once the law
10 started and once the law was effectuated, then
11 you were not supposed to continue. But when we
12 had issues with Tobacco King and when we had
13 issues with Budz and Roses and we had some re-
14 closures, it was like, okay, you know what the
15 law is and you continue to operate. And I'm
16 just trying to find out was he in management?
17 Was he overseeing these establishments when we
18 issued these summary closures?

19 MR. MIXON: Mr. Salim, if you'd like to
20 provide kind of the story around the Budz and
21 Roses situation in the U Street location.

22 MR. SALIM: Yes, yes, yes, yes, Mr.
23 Mixon, I think I can. Just to give a quick
24 explanation what had happened, I had actually
25 purchased that previous business. It was called

1 Budz and Roses. It was located at 1203 U
2 Street, I believe. And when I had bought the
3 business, we had transferred, basically we had
4 opened a new corporation under, you know, TK
5 1203, and we're in the process of changing the
6 business, basically, and having our own sign
7 while we're working on the sign permit.

8 It was still named Budz and Roses.
9 What had happened was the previous owner that
10 sold me the place was actually operating an
11 online website that we never knew of that was
12 under budzandroses.com or Budz and Roses
13 Delivery, and he actually had access to the
14 Google page where he was making illegal cannabis
15 sales, you know, under the same name as the
16 business and, basically, delivering them to
17 people's residence. Like, people, I think they
18 would call Yelp or something. We had control of
19 the Google page, but then Yelp was still under
20 his access and it was a different phone number,
21 so people would call him, like, hey, I want to
22 come in or I want to buy some stuff, I guess,
23 that was not allowed to be sold. But then he
24 was over there saying, okay, he'll deliver it
25 and play the impression of he still owns a

1 business.

2 MR. MIXON: And I think it would be
3 helpful also if you could just elaborate on just
4 briefly what is it that, for what purpose did
5 you buy the business and what was the actual
6 business model that you were running there?

7 MR. SALIM: Yes, yes. The business, I
8 wanted to basically turn it into like a tobacco
9 convenience store. The other owner that had the
10 business, he wasn't actually doing good and he
11 posted, I think, on Facebook or somewhere.
12 Through a friend of mine that I heard that he
13 was trying to sell the business because it was,
14 basically, it was just a cannabis business, and
15 he didn't, you know, evolve into snacks and
16 convenience store items and, you know, bongs and
17 stuff like that. That's basically, you know,
18 like accessories. You know, like just a smoke
19 shop, a stereotypical smoke shop.

20 I hope you get a clear understanding of
21 -- and then that's how the store ended up
22 getting raided, but things were sorted out. It
23 was cleared up that I had no -- I had nothing to
24 do with that website, which was the Budz and
25 Roses Delivery, or something like that, dot com.

1 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. I
2 don't have the summary closure notice, so I'm
3 not going to go further. So let me ask you a
4 question. So if this license was to be issued
5 for a Aloha, who is the owner and the management
6 team for this business?

7 MR. SALIM: I'm the owner of the
8 business. And this time, you know, for this
9 business, basically, I'm going to be hands-on.
10 I'm going to actually -- once things get moved
11 forward, I'm going to have to have a management
12 team that's going to be there, you know, hands-
13 on. And I'm also going to be involved hands-on
14 in the operation and making sure everything
15 operates smoothly.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Are you the 100-
17 percent owner of -- the business model, what is
18 it? Is this an LLC? I guess it's TK 539, LLC
19 and the name is Aloha. Are you 100-percent
20 owner of the LLC, or are there other partners?

21 MR. SALIM: Yes, yes, I am. I'm 100-
22 percent owner of the LLC, sir.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. All
24 right. So have you hired a management team as
25 yet, or are you just looking and thinking into

1 hiring a management team?

2 MR. SALIM: No, I am going to have a
3 management team that's going to be involved in
4 running the business, and I'm also going to be
5 involved. They're going to also, basically,
6 manage the day-to-day operations and making sure
7 everything's fine while I'll overlook
8 everything.

9 MR. MIXON: And to just expand on that
10 timeline wise, Mr. Chair, the business is
11 currently working at receiving a new updated
12 certificate of occupancy in order to proceed to
13 approval. And so we're on a timeline of where I
14 understand there is something around a month to
15 two months before any such construction and
16 inspections are done in order to be granted the
17 new certificate of occupancy. So decisions like
18 staffing are still being worked out in the
19 interim.

20 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
21 Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Mixon. So you
22 haven't hired any employees as yet for this
23 business; is that correct?

24 MR. SALIM: No, I haven't. No, that is
25 correct. Like Mr. Mixon said, we're still

1 basically in the stages of obtaining our
2 certificate of occupancy and business license
3 and setting up a few showcases.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Now, do you plan
5 to hire anyone who worked at Tobacco King or
6 Budz and Roses, the Budz and Roses Dispensary to
7 operate this in your dispensary if the license
8 is granted?

9 MR. SALIM: Yes, definitely. We're not
10 going to hire anybody that's involved with
11 Tobacco King or Budz and Roses. It's not like
12 anyone is involved now with them.

13 Whenever we went through those
14 incidents, you know, turnaround is very hard.
15 So we had a lot of new faces. But even if the
16 new faces that hasn't, you know, they're not
17 going to be -- it's going to basically be a new
18 team that runs Aloha a lot, you know, separate,
19 which is a high end, you know, medical cannabis
20 dispensary. That's good.
21 It's going to be community based, basically.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But there was a
23 question I was going to ask you. All right. So
24 you are aware of Tobacco King, the problem with
25 Tobacco King. You're also aware of the problems

1 with Budz and Roses, which is somewhere closer.

2 Are there any mitigating precautions set in
3 place to ensure illegal activity that occurred
4 in Tobacco King or Budz and Roses would not
5 occur in this establishment if the license was
6 granted?

7 MR. MIXON: I can take this one, Mr.
8 Chair. I have advised Mr. Salim to take
9 advantage of one of the ABCA-approved training
10 programs, so that any staff brought in to --

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on a
12 minute. Mr. Salim, are you still there?

13 MR. SALIM: Yes, yes, I'm still --

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. Go ahead.

15 MR. SALIM: I think the cameras went
16 out. I don't know.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: It did, and
18 that's why I want to make sure you're still
19 there. Go ahead, Mr. Mixon.

20 MR. SALIM: Okay. I'm here.

21 MR. MIXON: So, you know, we're aware
22 of the specific training program, employee
23 training programs that ABCA has officially
24 endorsed and Mr. Salim will be putting the staff
25 that he hires before it's opening through these

1 programs. So they are fully aware of best
2 practices for compliance with D.C. law.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So how will how
4 will Mr. Salim ensure that illegal activity will
5 not occur, if this license is granted, will not
6 occur in his establishment?

7 MR. MIXON: As I've advised him, he's
8 aware of the responsibility to only source
9 cannabis from holders of validly-issued
10 manufacturer or cultivation center licenses. And
11 because of his on-site, hands-on oversight and
12 that of his managers, they'll be regularly
13 monitoring purchase records, the storefront
14 itself, supervising such that there's no errant
15 rogue employee conduct.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Does Mr. Salim
17 have any background in cannabis here in the
18 District or some other jurisdiction?

19 MR. MIXON: Mr. Salim, you want to tell
20 them about your business history?

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And, Mr. Salim,
22 you're not under oath and nothing that you say
23 here can be used against you because you're not
24 under oath, sir.

25 MR. SALIM: Yes. Actually, I've been

1 in the retail, basically, tobacco convenient
2 store business since I was 17. I started
3 working there when I was in California. Then I
4 made the move. I moved here. Actually, about
5 12 years ago, I moved to Virginia and then
6 opened my one small shop in Waldorf, Maryland.

7 And then, after that, I actually
8 expanded in that type of business, which is, you
9 know, just tobacco, cigars, high-end cigar
10 shops, expanded from there to over 60 stores,
11 60 stores, and I opened a few in the District of
12 Columbia. Majority of my business is actually
13 done in Virginia, which is, you know, Virginia
14 is a tobacco state basically.

15 But I've been in the retail business,
16 you know, since I was basically 17, which is
17 retail customer service. Currently, I have a
18 coffee shop that I'm actually opening in
19 Virginia. That's, you know, a little bit
20 different than just the convenience store side
21 that I'm in. But it's mostly generally just
22 stays in the, you know, customer service area,
23 retail basically.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Mr.
25 Salim, are you aware that you can only

1 distribute, store, and sell medical cannabis
2 products provided by D.C. licensed cultivation
3 centers and manufacturers?

4 MR. SALIM: Yes, yes, I am aware. There
5 are a few licensed cultivator centers in D.C.
6 and manufacturers that we will be making all
7 100, obviously, you know, 100 percent of the
8 purchases from them in order to, you know, to
9 buy flowers, edibles, wax, and vape cartridges.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Does the
11 business have any Schedule I substance in its
12 possession, either on-site or at another
13 location?

14 MR. SALIM: No, no, we don't, sir.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Does the
16 business have any non-medical cannabis products
17 in its possession, either on-site or at another
18 location?

19 MR. SALIM: No, no, no, we don't.

20 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Any questions by
21 any of the Board members? Go ahead, Mr.
22 Meadows.

23 MEMBER MEADOWS: Good morning, Mr.
24 Salim. How are you today? I do have concerns
25 about these three businesses that were closed

1 for illegal activity, and I do believe that you,
2 Mr. Salim, have the qualifications to run a
3 business. I think that I do have a concern,
4 though, that perhaps you do have a lot of
5 business entities and you would not really pay
6 as much attention to this store located on 8th
7 Street Southeast in the Barracks Row.

8 Can you speak about that? Because,
9 earlier, you did mention that you would be a
10 hands-on manager of the establishment, so how
11 would you be able to split your time between
12 your numerous business entities?

13 MR. SALIM: Yes. Good morning. How
14 are you? A lot of the businesses now that I
15 have -- I do have multiple businesses across the
16 state of Virginia and in Maryland. But a lot of
17 my business that I have now, over the years, as
18 we grow up and life changes, now I have three
19 kids, I'm married, it's not the same. So over
20 the years, what I actually started doing with a
21 lot of my other businesses is I started actually
22 selling a percentage of my business to a partner
23 that can actually take care of it, that can
24 actually take care of my other businesses other
25 than, obviously, the cannabis shop in D.C.

1 That's how I'm gonna actually free up my
2 schedule and have some time to be more involved
3 into the 539 dispensary in D.C.

4 MEMBER MEADOWS: Thank you, and that's
5 understandable. You had a partner, Mr.
6 Gebremesco. Are you still in partnerships with
7 Mr. Gebremesco?

8 MR. SALIM: I'm not sure, no. No, I'm
9 not sure. Mr. Cameron, do you know anything
10 about the question? I'm not sure that name. I
11 don't know.

12 MR. MIXON: I'm not familiar with the
13 name, Member Meadows. Is he listed in a prior
14 order?

15 MEMBER MEADOWS: Yes, he's listed in a
16 case report with the Tobacco King and Vape on
17 14th.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I mean, if he's
19 not familiar with the person, then, I mean, if
20 you have a specific name, Mr. Meadows, and if he
21 says he's not familiar, then we can move on.

22 MEMBER MEADOWS: Yes, yes, yes. Okay.
23 Well, I thank you for your time this morning.
24 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Any other

1 questions from any of the Board members.

2 MR. SALIM: No, I think so.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Go ahead, Mr.
4 Salim.

5 MR. SALIM: No, No. I just wanted to
6 say, you know, thank you guys for your time.
7 Thank you guys for bearing with me. It's the
8 9th day of Ramadan, so I'm fasting. So I'm not
9 all the way there, so I just wanted to, you know
10 -- because I haven't had, obviously, coffee or
11 anything this morning. So I'm kind of a little
12 bit, you know, I feel like I'm dazed a little
13 bit. So I don't know if I came off that way.

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You're fine,
15 sir. Yes, that's fine, sir. I just want to
16 say, Mr. Salim, it's you've been linked to
17 establishments that has had three violations.
18 If the Board was to move forward to approve this
19 license, we want to make sure that we don't see
20 this establishment in front of us for not
21 complying with the law. So the purpose of this
22 hearing is just to get clarification on your
23 involvement with these
24 establishments and to get assurances from you
25 that we're not going to be seeing you again

1 because you're going to ensure that you're not
2 going to sell products that are not bought from
3 a legal dispensary or manufacturer in D.C.; that
4 every medical patient that comes into your
5 establishment, they'll have a medical card to
6 purchase; that you will also participate in the
7 metric system.

8 And so that is just some of the
9 concerns that the board has to make sure that we
10 don't see you again because, if we were to see
11 you for you not complying with the law, there
12 are measures that the Board would have to take
13 because, now that you're 100-percent owner of
14 this establishment, and so you are fully aware
15 and fully in charge and the Board will hold you
16 responsible for any illegal action that's taken
17 by you or any of your employees.

18 MR. SALIM: Definitely. Mr. Anderson,
19 I wanted to assure you, you know, you guys,
20 hopefully, you know, we don't run into each
21 other or see me because, you know -- that's it.

22 MR. MIXON: If you have any questions
23 regarding proper operations, you can always come
24 to our office and we can advise him
25 appropriately.

1 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you very
2 much, Mr. Salim, for your appearance this
3 morning. Mr. Mixon, have a great day.

4 The Board will take this matter under
5 advisement. We'll advise the agency on the next
6 steps that should be taken towards the issuance
7 of the license.

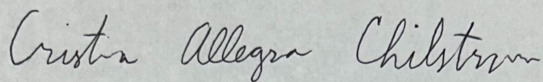
8 All right. Thank you.

9 (Whereupon, the above-referred to
10 matter went off the record at 11:28 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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2 This is to certify that the foregoing transcript
3 was duly recorded and accurately transcribed
4 under my direction; further, that said
5 transcript is a true and accurate record of the
6 proceedings; and that I am neither counsel for,
7 related to, nor employed by any of the parties
8 to this action in which this matter was taken;
9 and further that I am not a relative nor an
10 employee of any of the parties nor counsel
11 employed by the parties, and I am not
12 financially or otherwise interested in the
13 outcome of the action.

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20 Cristina Allegra Chilstrom
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