

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
+ + + + +  
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD  
+ + + + +  
MEETING

IN THE MATTER OF:                   :  
  :  
Wasted, Inc.,                        :  
t/a Cru Hemp Lounge               :  
816 H Street NE                    :  
License #117958                   :  
Retailer CT - ANC 6A               :  
  :  
(Application for a                   :  
New License)                        :

Wednesday  
March 24, 2021

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

PRESENT:

DONOVAN W. ANDERSON, Chairperson  
BOBBY CATO, JR., Member  
RAFI ALIYA CROCKETT, Member  
EDWARD S. GRANDIS, Member  
JENI HANSEN, Member  
JAMES SHORT, JR., Member  
REMA WAHABZADAH, Member

ALSO PRESENT:

SIMONE ANDREWS, DC ABRA Staff  
MICHAEL BRYANT, Applicant/Franchisee  
DENNIS MCKINLEY, Present in Support of Applicant  
(Company Founder)  
SEAN MORRIS, Applicant's Counsel  
KARA WILSON, Present in Support of Applicant  
(Company COO)

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

2 (10:43 a.m.)

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Good morning,  
4 everyone. We're on the record.

5 As Chairperson of the Alcoholic  
6 Beverage Control Board for the District of  
7 Columbia, in accordance with D.C. Official Code  
8 Section 2576 of the Open Meetings Act, I'm  
9 welcoming you to the regularly scheduled meeting  
10 of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board.

11 This meeting is being conducted  
12 pursuant to guidance made available by the  
13 District of Columbia's Office of Open Government  
14 regarding electronic meetings held by public  
15 bodies during a public health emergency.

16 Pursuant to this guidance, notice of  
17 today's meeting was provided 48 hours in advance  
18 of the meeting on ABRA's website and on the  
19 District's Central Meeting Calendar. The notice  
20 included a time, date, agenda, and call-in or  
21 log-in information for public participation.

22 This electronic meeting is being  
23 hosted by a Webex account provided by the  
24 District of Columbia government. Please address  
25 any questions or complaints to the OOG at

1 opengovoffice@dc.gov.

2 My name is Donovan Anderson, and I'm  
3 Chairman of the Board. I would like to introduce  
4 the other members of the ABC Board who are also  
5 participating electronically pursuant to Mayor's  
6 Order 2020-054.

7 Please respond when I announce your  
8 name. Mr. James Short?

9 MEMBER SHORT: Mr. James Short.  
10 Present.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Bobby Cato?

12 MEMBER CATO: Bobby Cato. Present.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Ms. Rema  
14 Wahabzadah?

15 MEMBER WAHABZADAH: Rema Wahabzadah.  
16 Present.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Ms. Rafi  
18 Crockett?

19 MEMBER CROCKETT: Rafi Crockett.  
20 Present.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Ms. Jeni  
22 Hansen?

23 MEMBER HANSEN: Jeni Hansen. Present.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And Mr. Edward  
25 Grandis?

1 MEMBER GRANDIS: Edward Grandis.

2 Present.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: The Board has  
4 seven members in attendance for the conduct of  
5 business today, and that constitutes a quorum.

6 Before we get underway with today's  
7 hearing calendar, I need to make a few  
8 instructions that are clear, so that the conduct  
9 of these hearings is understood by everyone.

10 There are two cases on our calendar  
11 for today, one case this morning and a case that  
12 -- at least that's on the calendar for the  
13 afternoon, which I will make an announcement that  
14 that case is going to be postponed until a  
15 different date.

16 Once a case is called, I will take a  
17 moment for our IT specialist to elevate the  
18 rights for each party to enable their camera and  
19 microphone. Then, and only then, will you have  
20 the ability to enable your equipment.

21 If your case has not been heard, you  
22 will remain mute and your camera will be  
23 disabled.

24 At the conclusion of each case, the  
25 parties will have the option to leave. If the

1 party chooses to stay, all cameras and  
2 microphones for that concluded case will be  
3 disabled.

4 Should you have any questions or  
5 require technical assistance during the hearing,  
6 please submit them using the question and answer  
7 feature or email [simone.andrews2@dc.gov](mailto:simone.andrews2@dc.gov).

8 Our first case this morning is a fact-  
9 finding hearing on Wasted, Inc., trade name Cru  
10 Hemp Lounge, License Number 117958.

11 Ms. Andrews, can you please elevate  
12 the rights of the licensee and their  
13 representative, please.

14 MS. ANDREWS: Sure. Standby.

15 Mr. Morris, your rights have been  
16 elevated.

17 Mr. Bryant, your rights have been  
18 elevated.

19 That's all, Mr. Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Bryant, can  
21 you, if you have a camera, please turn the camera  
22 on, if you -- all right. Good morning,  
23 everybody.

24 MR. BRYANT: Good morning.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Now, this is

1 we have a fact-finding hearing, and the -- a  
2 license was requested for this establishment, Cru  
3 Hemp Lounge. This is a new concept for us, and  
4 we're in a fact-finding hearing.

5 The purpose of the fact-finding  
6 hearing is to just gather information. The Board  
7 has not made any decision. We are just trying to  
8 get some information about this business, the  
9 business model, what your intentions are. And  
10 once this information is provided, we will make a  
11 determination.

12 Fact-finding hearings also -- no one  
13 is sworn in. It's informal, so this is not a  
14 formal process. It's a fact-finding hearing.

15 So answering -- if you can answer the  
16 questions that I ask, or the Board asks, it  
17 behooves you to answer truthfully any question  
18 the Board asks. Because if we're going to make a  
19 -- if we're going to make a decision -- and,  
20 clearly, if we have an answer, if we have a  
21 question, and if you don't answer the question,  
22 then that -- it's human nature. I'll just say it  
23 that way.

24 It's human nature that if -- if  
25 someone has a question, and they ask a question,

1 and if you don't give them an answer, then  
2 they're going to ponder in making their decision  
3 why you didn't answer. But I'm just saying it's  
4 an informal procedure -- proceeding, and we're  
5 just gathering information.

6 All right. So let's start with -- and  
7 I don't know, let's -- so, Mr. Bryant, can you  
8 spell and state your name for the record, and  
9 state who you are, please.

10 MR. BRYANT: Sure. My name is Michael  
11 Bryant. That's M-I-C-H-A-E-L, Bryant, B-R-Y-A-N-  
12 T. And I am one of the owners of Wasted,  
13 Incorporated. We

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I just -- I  
15 just want to get your -- just your name first.

16 And, Mr. Morris, go ahead, please.

17 MR. MORRIS: Hi. My name is Sean  
18 Morris, Morris Law Firm. My address is  
19 9210 Corporate Boulevard, Suite 230, Rockville,  
20 Maryland 20850. And I am counsel for the  
21 applicants on this license.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So who is going  
23 to speak? Are you -- is it you, Mr. Morris? Or  
24 you, Mr. Bryant? Let me -- let me -- who should  
25 I

1           MR. MORRIS: Mr. Bryant is certainly  
2 more than capable, and he's actually looking  
3 forward to answering any of the Board's questions  
4 regarding this concept, just by way of a very  
5 brief introduction, and Mr. Bryant is far more  
6 capable than I am of explaining the concept.

7           But just for the Board's reference,  
8 this is a franchise concept out of Atlanta. They  
9 have more than a dozen locations either open or  
10 in development, primarily in the southeast and  
11 southwestern United States. It was founded by  
12 Dennis McKinley, who is a very experienced  
13 franchisor. You might have heard of the Original  
14 Hot Dog Factory. They also have more than a  
15 dozen locations ranging from Brooklyn down to  
16 Atlanta.

17           This will be the first Cru Hemp Lounge  
18 in the District of Columbia. And I know  
19 Mr. Bryant is -- we're pleased, actually, to have  
20 this opportunity to answer the Board's questions  
21 about the concept and what we plan to bring to  
22 the District of Columbia.

23           CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So  
24 basically what I -- what I will start with is  
25 just, either you, Mr. Morris, or Mr. Bryant just



1 tell us -- provide us information regarding your  
2 other ones, and so on.

3 Is there a Mr. McKinley on the line  
4 that you need us to elevate? Who is that?

5 MR. BRYANT: Mr. McKinley is the  
6 founder of the franchise. He is on the line, so  
7 he

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. So we  
9 can -- do you want us to elevate his rights? And  
10 that's why I'm saying, if you

11 MR. BRYANT: Yes.

12 MR. MORRIS: Mr. Chairman, we thought  
13 it might be helpful to have Mr. McKinley. He is  
14 the founder of the concept. He is overseeing the  
15 development of all of the other locations and  
16 knows more about what's happening with the ones  
17 that are in development and open already.

18 And we just wanted to make him  
19 available to the Board to answer any questions,  
20 to the extent that might be helpful to

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

22 MR. MORRIS: -- helpful in this fact-  
23 finding hearing.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. So,  
25 Ms. Andrews, again, elevate his rights. So if he

1 wants to speak, he can speak. He doesn't have  
2 to, but -- and so if you see me pick up my phone,  
3 it's not that I have more important things that I  
4 need to do. It's just that because we're doing  
5 all of this remotely, so I'm getting information  
6 from the agency itself. So that's how I know the  
7 -- that's why I've got my phone, and I was told  
8 there's a -- there's a Mr. McKinley somewhere  
9 hanging out in the background.

10 MR. MORRIS: Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So  
12 just wanted people to know I'm not being -- it's  
13 not like I have more important things to do that  
14 are more important. It's that I'm trying to make  
15 sure that I manage this hearing and do the  
16 technical things, too.

17 So whenever -- I don't see  
18 Mr. McKinley at the moment. When he is -- yeah,  
19 Mr. McKinley, if you want to -- if you want to  
20 unmute your phone, turn your microphone on, and  
21 just introduce yourself for the record, and spell  
22 and state your name, sir, when you're ready.

23 Mr. McKinley, can you please identify  
24 -- identify yourself for the record, please.

25 MS. ANDREWS: Mr. Chair, it looks like

1 he is having connection issues.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. All  
3 right. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Andrews.

4 Once Mr. McKinley -- once he  
5 identifies himself by -- I will have -- I will  
6 give him an opportunity to identify himself for  
7 the record.

8 So either you, Mr. Bryant, or  
9 Mr. Morris, what the Board is concerned about,  
10 just tell us about the concept. What is it that  
11 you have -- what is it that you have in mind?  
12 Just tell us as much information -- again, it's a  
13 new concept.

14 Mr. McKinley, are you -- Mr. McKinley,  
15 we can't hear you, so maybe you need to log off  
16 and log back on.

17 MR. MCKINLEY: McKinley, D -- D-E-N

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on.  
19 Mr. McKinley, I believe that your internet  
20 connection is poor, so I would ask for you to log  
21 off and log back on, and maybe you'll get a --  
22 okay. All right. Mr. McKinley, can you -- I can  
23 see you. So can you spell and state your name  
24 for the record, please.

25 All right. We'll -- Mr. McKinley, I

1 saw you for a minute, but I couldn't hear you.  
2 So what we're going to do is we'll just -- we'll  
3 keep you mute. You can mute yourself. And if  
4 there is -- once you have gotten your connection  
5 issues settled, and if we have any specific  
6 questions for you, we will ask you.

7 So what we are -- where we are right  
8 now, either Mr. Bryant or Mr. Morris, just tell  
9 us about who you are. I mean, I think,  
10 Mr. Bryant, you can tell us about who you are.  
11 You can start telling us who you are.

12 I mean, is this a new venture for you?  
13 Have you ever owned a license? Have you owned a  
14 business? What type of experience, if any, do  
15 you have running a business? And just tell us  
16 about your business and the concepts that you  
17 want to introduce to the District, please.

18 MR. BRYANT: Sure. My name is, again,  
19 Michael Bryant. Good morning, Board. I  
20 appreciate you guys having me on.

21 A little bit of background about  
22 myself. I currently own a commercial cleaning  
23 company that operates out of Pennsylvania. We  
24 have three commercial franchises that we own and  
25 operate there. Military veteran. Government --

1 prior government employee. I worked for the  
2 Department of the Army in Arlington, Virginia, at  
3 the National Guard Bureau, for over 18 years, and  
4 then decided to make a change in life and opened  
5 cleaning franchises.

6 Met with Mr. McKinley and decided to  
7 partner up with him and open some franchises  
8 throughout the District of Columbia and  
9 Pennsylvania. The concept that we are trying to  
10 bring to the D.C. area is called Cru Hemp Lounge.  
11 It's an upscale lounge that is by reservation  
12 only. And it's a two-hour interval, and then  
13 after that the next set of reservations come in.

14 Our business consists of ourselves,  
15 and things consist of 50 percent alcohol,  
16 40 percent food, and 10 percent tobacco. We do  
17 offer the option of CBD to be added to the  
18 tobacco, and that's where you get -- we're doing  
19 that for all of our customers.

20 We are a forward-looking company. We  
21 see the way of the future in regards to THC and  
22 things of that nature. So we added the word  
23 "hemp" in there because we do use CBD currently,  
24 and that's how we operate. That's our branding.

25 So that's a little bit about the

1 company. We do have currently right now, as  
2 Mr. Morris said, locations currently open and  
3 operating in the State of Georgia, the State of  
4 Texas, and the State of North Carolina. And we  
5 have another 15 or so, if not more, that are  
6 under development, again, in Georgia, Arizona,  
7 Michigan, Tennessee, Texas, Florida, Alabama,  
8 North Carolina, a D.C. location, and a Pittsburgh  
9 location as well.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Anything else  
11 you want to share before we ask questions? I  
12 mean, as I said before, it's you telling -- you  
13 put it out there first, and then, once you put it  
14 out there, then we'll ask questions, because this  
15 is a new concept to us also.

16 So I'll -- with full disclosure, I did  
17 go and Google the -- Google the name of the  
18 concept online, so I have some information, so  
19 I'll put it out there because I -- it's a new  
20 concept. So I

21 MR. BRYANT: Your connection broke up  
22 a little bit.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Oh. I was just  
24 saying, with full disclosure, I went and I  
25 Googled the name to look. So I'm not going to

1 to look and see, so I'll put that out there. But  
2 that still has -- that still has not provided me  
3 with sufficient information to know more about  
4 it.

5 You talk about the fact that you  
6 infuse CBD in the tobacco process. So

7 MR. BRYANT: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: -- how, I mean,  
9 does it -- do you do that, or is it -- is it  
10 produced that way? Tell me about that.

11 MR. BRYANT: That process, with  
12 hookah, we use what's called hashi in the hookah  
13 process, and they can actually add to -- when  
14 they're making that -- when they're making the  
15 hookahs in the establishment, basically, we make  
16 them based on flavor. And when we're making  
17 those flavors, if they want CBD infused, it's  
18 just CBD added to that process.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. You  
20 didn't mention hookah before. You didn't mention  
21 hookah before, but you know that there's a  
22 separate process in D.C. for hookah. Is that  
23 hookah -- having a hookah, that's another process  
24 through the Department of Health, and you'd have  
25 to get a permit from the Department of Health.

1 And you're also aware that at least during the  
2 public health emergency that hookah is not --  
3 cannot occur in D.C. So these are things that  
4 you can -- you are aware of.

5 Have you investigated this process to  
6 get a license for hookah through the Department  
7 of Health?

8 MR. BRYANT: Yes, sir, we have. We  
9 have also applied for the smoke exemption and  
10 everything else that follows that as well.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But where --  
12 well, our law -- it's just not us. I'm just --  
13 I'm just asking, so how long ago did you apply  
14 for this, and where are you in the process?

15 MR. BRYANT: We applied for it over  
16 30 days ago, and they told us they would be in  
17 contact once everything is validated and  
18 verified.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. And  
20 so do you have -- I know that you have an address  
21 on H Street. So is this -- is this a location?  
22 What type of establishment is this on H Street?

23 MR. BRYANT: So on H Street, it's  
24 816 H Street, Northeast. It is a building that  
25 has been used for various concepts before.



1 Currently, right now, there is a concept on the  
2 third floor. We're on the second floor. The  
3 concept on the third floor is called Dirty Water.  
4 It's a bar, and they have, you know, their liquor  
5 license and things of that nature.

6 We're going to the second floor, and  
7 previous to us, the second floor was ran by a  
8 company called Beetle House, I think. They owned  
9 and operated a liquor license in that  
10 establishment prior to us.

11 And the first floor under us is vacant  
12 at the moment.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You're saying  
14 that in the building -- so in the building, there  
15 is -- there is another liquor establishment,  
16 Dirty Water, is that what you're saying is --

17 MR. BRYANT: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: -- already  
19 there? So they're on the second floor, and you  
20 are

21 MR. BRYANT: They're on the third  
22 floor.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so your  
24 space would be where, the second floor?

25 MR. BRYANT: The second floor.

1                   CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So your -- tell  
2 me about what your -- because your name is Cru  
3 Hemp Lounge, so what does -- tell me about the  
4 hemp portion of it, and how did you come up with  
5 this -- with this -- what role does hemp play in  
6 this process? And so it's -- the name is -- the  
7 trade name is Cru Hemp Lounge.

8                   MR. BRYANT: As of right now, it's --  
9 again, we are a forward-thinking company. We are  
10 thinking forward to the future and the way that  
11 things are going in regards to hemp, and things  
12 of that nature.

13                   It's right now in the -- currently in  
14 the process it doesn't play a part because we use  
15 CBD oil. We're just being prepared -- preparing  
16 ourselves for the future and future concepts, so  
17 if that were ever to come to fruition.

18                   CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Now, have you  
19 discussed -- do you know whether or not -- and  
20 I'm asking you, since you're saying that CBD is  
21 infused in the hookah process, I mean, what  
22 knowledge or information do you have whether or  
23 not you can -- you can utilize CBD in the hookah  
24 process in D.C.?

25                   MR. BRYANT: That has been researched

1 more so by Mr. McKinley as well as my business  
2 partner, who is actually, you know, sitting on  
3 the call with me listening. They have knowledge  
4 and know-how about that process.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Now  
6 tell me about -- one of the things that you  
7 mentioned before was that there's a reservation  
8 system for two hours. Tell me about the concept.  
9 I mean, how is it that -- how is this going to  
10 work?

11 And if I was to show up -- and say  
12 this license was to be granted and I was to show  
13 up, how is this reservation system -- and is it  
14 permanent? Or is this reservation system just  
15 because of the COVID-19?

16 MR. BRYANT: No, sir. It was  
17 pre-COVID-19. It was developed during the  
18 concept itself. So that's a permanent thing, and  
19 you would go online for -- to make a reservation.  
20 And once you made a reservation online, you know,  
21 for you and your party, we would let you know if  
22 it's available, let you know the process of, hey,  
23 it's a two-hour interval.

24 We let you know that, you know, when  
25 you make the reservation, when we call and

1 confirm the reservation, again, we let you know,  
2 you know, all of that, that it's two hours and  
3 you can't linger around after that during that  
4 process.

5 So your -- during your whole time we  
6 let you know, you know, how much time you have  
7 remaining, and, hey, we're letting you know that  
8 your party is ending at this time, you know, pay  
9 your tab for your food, your -- if you had drinks  
10 and things of that nature, and then we escort you  
11 out of the establishment, so that we can clean  
12 and prepare for the next set of reservations.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: There is --  
14 there is a Kara Wilson on the line. Is that  
15 someone who

16 MR. BRYANT: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Ms. Andrews, if  
18 you can elevate this person, Kara Wilson, you can  
19 -- if they -- yeah, you can elevate their rights,  
20 if they want to be identified. And she can put  
21 her information in the chat and -- if she wants  
22 to be elevated.

23 Now, tell me how your -- you stated  
24 that there are -- there's an operating  
25 establishment in Georgia, Texas, and North

1 Carolina.

2 MR. BRYANT: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And from --  
4 it's my understanding the concept first came in  
5 Georgia. So how does this reservation system  
6 work? I mean, it's like, well, I'm -- I know the  
7 way you explained it to me, but, I mean, I'm --  
8 I'm out to party. I'm at a tavern

9 MR. BRYANT: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: -- a tavern  
11 lounge to party. And how do you mean you're  
12 going to tell me that I only have two hours, and  
13 when two hours is done, okay, I need to get up  
14 and leave? Tell me about that.

15 MR. BRYANT: Yes. It's

16 MS. WILSON: Hi. How are you doing?  
17 This is Kara.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry. Can  
19 you spell and state your name for the record,  
20 please.

21 MS. WILSON: Hi. I'm Kara Wilson, K-  
22 A-R-A, last name Wilson, W-I-L-S-O-N.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And who are  
24 you, ma'am?

25 MS. WILSON: I have been in the

1 company for the last six years. I am the COO.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

3 Thank you, ma'am.

4 If Mr. McKinley -- is he -- is he  
5 there? Does he want to identify -- is his  
6 connection

7 MS. WILSON: He is in the -- he is in  
8 the airport, so his signal is really bad.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.  
10 That's fine. Okay. I'm sorry. Go ahead,  
11 Mr. Bryant. And if, Mr. Bryant, when -- if there  
12 is someone else who -- who is there able to  
13 answer the question, then you can say, "This is  
14 a question that," and you can then direct who  
15 should answer the question. Okay?

16 MR. BRYANT: Okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Go ahead, sir.

18 MR. BRYANT: So, Kara, they just asked  
19 a question in regards to the reservations and how  
20 that process works when a person has made a  
21 reservation and how they are told to -- that they  
22 have two hours for their reservation, how they  
23 are notified, when we notify them, and things of  
24 that nature.

25 MS. WILSON: Yes.

1                   MR. BRYANT: Can you further explain  
2 that to the Board?

3                   MS. WILSON: Sure.

4                   MR. BRYANT: Thank you.

5                   MS. WILSON: Sure. So historically,  
6 you know, our concept is more of an intimate  
7 concept. So our locations are normally smaller  
8 than most places. So what we came up with is an  
9 idea to be able to let someone come in, get the  
10 full experience, and then we move on to the next  
11 group of guests.

12                   So when they make their reservation  
13 online, they are given a blurb about our two-hour  
14 seating, you know, it gives them a 15-minute  
15 grace period. They get that up front. And then  
16 when they actually arrive, the host that's at the  
17 host stand at the door will again reiterate the  
18 two-hour mark.

19                   And then once we get to about  
20 30 minutes until their reservation is over, their  
21 server will then again reiterate, "Hi, you know,  
22 you guys have 30 minutes left. I'm going to go  
23 start closing you guys out. You don't have to  
24 leave, but we do have reservations coming up  
25 behind you."

1           So it's told to them at least three or  
2 four times throughout their whole entire process  
3 of being with us.

4           CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But you mean --  
5 but you said they don't have to leave. What does  
6 that mean, they don't have to leave?

7           MS. WILSON: So some of our locations  
8 have, you know, an area where they can stand, a  
9 bar area. Some of them in other states have  
10 outside areas. So it just means like you don't  
11 necessarily have to leave the building. If there  
12 is space at the bar, if there is space somewhere  
13 else, you can feel free to stay. You just would  
14 have to forfeit your actual seating arrangement  
15 if there is a table after you.

16          CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So  
17 the reservation is -- so the reservation, then,  
18 is for seating at the -- at I guess there is --  
19 so tell me -- tell me about the setup. Tell me  
20 about the setup of the establishment.

21          MR. BRYANT: Here in D.C.?

22          CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes. That has  
23 been -- that is being proposed in D.C.

24          MR. BRYANT: Okay. So, in D.C., there  
25 is no outdoor seating. There is no -- of course,



1 because of COVID, there is no bar seating. So at  
2 the space they are

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, let me --  
4 all right. I'm hoping and praying that we're  
5 going to move beyond COVID. I don't know when.

6 MS. WILSON: Right.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But we're going  
8 to move beyond COVID. And so I'm trying to find  
9 like your business model. We understand that we  
10 changed the law because of COVID, but so what I  
11 need from you is your business model beyond  
12 COVID.

13 MR. BRYANT: Okay. So beyond COVID,  
14 we have, I want to say, 12 bar seats that are at  
15 the bar. So if their reservation is up and their  
16 two hours are up, and we have a party of six that  
17 would still like to stay and enjoy the  
18 atmosphere, then we could move them to the bar,  
19 if the bar seating is available. Other than  
20 that, so we don't have any, again, outdoor  
21 seating or any extra seating beyond that.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I wonder if you  
23 have a Certificate of Occupancy as yet from  
24 Department of -- from DCRA. So about how many  
25 people do you envision, in a perfect world -- and

1 I don't know if you have a Certificate of  
2 Occupancy. If you do, you can tell me. What is  
3 the occupancy of the place? I'm just trying to  
4 figure out how -- how this

5 MR. BRYANT: It's for 44 people seated  
6 and 66 max.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So  
8 there are 66 people -- all right. So you can  
9 have a maximum of 66 people in the establishment.  
10 So I assume that each -- and, again, the way the  
11 process works, you'll get a Certificate of  
12 Occupancy from DCRA, and you will come to us and  
13 we -- our -- if you were to get a license, your  
14 Certificate of Occupancy from us -- I'm sorry,  
15 your occupancy that's on your license would not  
16 exceed what's on your Certificate of Occupancy  
17 from DCRA.

18 It might be smaller. Your license  
19 might say that you have a smaller occupancy load,  
20 but it will not exceed the occupancy load that  
21 was provided by DCRA.

22 MR. BRYANT: Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Just wanted to  
24 let you know that. So I guess the concept is  
25 that, so once your two-hour time is done, then

1 you don't have to leave if -- as long as you have  
2 not exceeded your occupancy load of the -- of the  
3 establishment, so they can hang around the bar or  
4 whatever they're going to do. I mean, can they  
5 -- it's a hookah lounge and -- I'm sorry.

6 Is it -- do you have to be -- to  
7 participate in -- well, I guess tell me, why do  
8 people go to this type of establishment? What do  
9 they go there for? Do they go -- do they go for  
10 the bar/lounge experience, so they're going to  
11 like sit at a bar -- sit at the bar, have a  
12 drink, have some cocktails, or do I need to be at  
13 a table, so I can

14 MS. WILSON: I can

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: -- participate  
16 in hookah?

17 MS. WILSON: I can answer this.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What is -- tell  
19 me, please.

20 MS. WILSON: We call ourselves Cru

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Ms. Wilson, I'm  
22 sorry. Whenever you're going to speak, because  
23 the hearing is being transcribed, just identify  
24 yourself before you speak. That's all. Okay?

25 MS. WILSON: Okay. Kara Wilson

1 speaking. We pride ourselves on creating an  
2 atmosphere where customers enjoy themselves.  
3 We're not a club. We're not even a bar. What we  
4 are is somewhere where people are, you know,  
5 Instagramming, taking a lot of pictures, you  
6 know, they come for, honestly, our customer  
7 service.

8 In our previous flagship location,  
9 that is the reason why we even decided to make  
10 this a franchise, because of how much the  
11 customers really truly enjoy our experience. So  
12 they're coming for the handcrafted cocktails.  
13 They are coming for the small plates, because you  
14 can do all of that in one seating and it doesn't  
15 feel, you know, like you're in -- you're not in a  
16 club.

17 It's not -- you can talk to each  
18 other. You can even have a business meeting at  
19 Cru. The music is not loud. It's more so just  
20 having an experience.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. I don't  
22 -- anything else you want add? Or other Board  
23 members -- other Board members, any other Board  
24 members, do they have any questions that they  
25 want to ask of any of the representatives?

1 MEMBER SHORT: Mr. Short. I

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Mr. Short.  
3 Go ahead.

4 MEMBER SHORT: -- have a few questions  
5 I would like to ask. Any one of you can answer  
6 this. You stated you have an occupancy of 66  
7 people?

8 MR. BRYANT: Yes, sir.

9 MEMBER SHORT: Can you maintain that?

10 MR. BRYANT: No. Typically, our  
11 reservations never go past 50 people.

12 MEMBER SHORT: No. No. We're not  
13 talking reservations. On your license, or on  
14 your Certificate of Occupancy, you mentioned  
15 something about DCRA and the number 66. Explain  
16 that to me.

17 MR. BRYANT: Yes. It was seating.  
18 They said we could have 44 personnel, sir, and  
19 then they said the max would be 66 persons. So  
20 that includes

21 MEMBER SHORT: Let me get you -- let  
22 me get something straight. So how many people  
23 seated, and how many people standing?

24 MR. BRYANT: So 44 seated, and which  
25 means that would be 22 could stand.

1                   MEMBER SHORT: At the same time, or is  
2 that according to seating arrangements and  
3 standing up? And I'm asking this question  
4 because normally if you tell me it's a very small  
5 location, how do you get 66 people into a small  
6 location? How many square feet is it?

7                   MR. BRYANT: The square feet is  
8 roughly 1,800 square feet.

9                   MEMBER SHORT: Okay. You also  
10 mentioned that on the third floor -- you're on  
11 the second floor, and the first floor is vacant.

12                  MR. BRYANT: Yes, sir.

13                  MEMBER SHORT: On the third floor, do  
14 you know how many -- how many customers can be  
15 there? What is the occupancy number?

16                  MR. BRYANT: 110, I think it is,  
17 because they have outdoor seating upstairs. They  
18 have rooftop.

19                  MEMBER SHORT: Okay. Now let me ask  
20 you this. Do you and the persons on the third  
21 floor use the same exit and egress?

22                  MR. BRYANT: Yes.

23                  MEMBER SHORT: So if everybody had to  
24 leave the building at one time, you're talking  
25 about almost 200 people. How many exits and

1 egresses do you have?

2

3 MR. BRYANT: We have a front access  
4 and a back access.

5 MEMBER SHORT: Okay. Let me -- so you  
6 have an exit directly off of the second floor?

7 MR. BRYANT: Yes.

8 MEMBER SHORT: Or you have to come  
9 down to the first floor?

10 MR. BRYANT: You have to walk down to  
11 the first floor. So it's a set of steps -- when  
12 you come through this door, as soon as you come  
13 into the establishment, when you come through the  
14 door, you can go directly left, and that's the  
15 access to the first floor. You can come up one  
16 landing and steps, and then you're on the second  
17 floor. Or you can continue to go up, and there's  
18 a third -- you can go up to the next landing and  
19 there's the third floor.

20 MEMBER SHORT: I'm kind of familiar  
21 with the building, and I'm kind of familiar with  
22 the -- with the layout.

23 MR. BRYANT: Yes, sir.

24 MEMBER SHORT: I've just heard you say  
25 -- so what I'm trying to get to, if there is an

1 emergency and everybody had to leave the building  
2 at once, how many exits can each floor -- so on  
3 the third floor, the rooftop, do they have to  
4 come down to your level to get out?

5 MR. BRYANT: They can go -- yes.

6 MEMBER SHORT: So if there is an  
7 emergency on the front, on H Street, and they  
8 can't come down the steps, everybody is going to  
9 be there on the second floor; is that correct?

10 MR. BRYANT: Or they can go out the  
11 back exit, sir, and go out the back door.

12 MEMBER SHORT: That's takes you to the  
13 alley.

14 MR. BRYANT: Yes, sir.

15 MEMBER SHORT: All right. Now, one  
16 other question. And this would be to your  
17 attorney, Mr. Morris.

18 MR. MORRIS: Yes, sir.

19 MEMBER SHORT: Mr. Morris, are you the  
20 agent for this -- for this business?

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Short?  
22 We're not

23 MR. MORRIS: Yes.

24 MEMBER SHORT: He's their lawyer. He  
25 is their attorney, and what I'm asking,



1 Mr. Chair, is is he the responsible person for  
2 this agency or the District government to get in  
3 contact with if there is an issue with the  
4 business.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But that's --  
6 all right.

7 MEMBER SHORT: Can you answer

8 MR. MORRIS: Yes, sir. For the  
9 purpose of this license, absolutely.

10 MEMBER SHORT: You are the agent.

11 MR. MORRIS: I am the designated agent  
12 on this application. Yes, sir.

13 MEMBER SHORT: Okay. Can you tell me  
14 your business address?

15 MR. MORRIS: Yes. It's 9210 Corporate  
16 Boulevard, Suite 230, Rockville, Maryland 20850.

17 MEMBER SHORT: Do you have a D.C.  
18 address?

19 MR. MORRIS: No, I do not.

20 MEMBER SHORT: Okay. Thank you.

21 That's all I have, Mr. Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. All  
23 right, Mr. Short.

24 Are there any other questions? Do any  
25 other Board members want to ask questions?

1 MEMBER GRANDIS: Mr. Chairman?

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Mr.

3 Grandis.

4 MEMBER GRANDIS: May I?

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes.

6 MEMBER GRANDIS: Thank you. And it's  
7 a pleasure to meet you both for this hearing and  
8 to help us understand the business model. It  
9 sounds like to me it's an intimate experience --  
10 using your words. It's almost like if I had  
11 invited people over to my home to have, let's  
12 say, small plates, a glass of wine, you know,  
13 hookah, so to speak.

14 So all of that I understand, but in  
15 that -- in that scenario, why do you need a cover  
16 charge?

17 MR. BRYANT: There is no cover charge.

18 MEMBER GRANDIS: The application is  
19 requesting a cover charge.

20 MR. BRYANT: The application is  
21 requesting cover charges in the event that we  
22 have a special event, say if we have say someone  
23 come in -- an entertainer come and just -- you  
24 could grace them with their presence, or  
25 something to that nature. But there is no cover

1 charge to -- on any given day unless stated to  
2 enter into the establishment.

3 MEMBER GRANDIS: Yes. And I can help  
4 with that. We just -- when we were requesting  
5 the entertainment endorsement, for placarding  
6 purposes and out of an abundance of caution, we  
7 requested all three aspects of the entertainment  
8 endorsement just -- just in the event -- as the  
9 applicant mentions, in the event there was -- on  
10 a rare occasion that it might be appropriate to  
11 charge a cover charge. But that is not part of  
12 the business model.

13 MEMBER GRANDIS: So the business model  
14 doesn't include bringing in promoters? Or would  
15 that be a possibility?

16 MR. BRYANT: We have -- we do have  
17 promoters. As far -- so that the people can make  
18 the reservation, so that the business can thrive,  
19 so that we are successful. We do have promoters  
20 for that aspect.

21 MR. MORRIS: But just to clarify, I  
22 think in terms -- that would be promoting in  
23 terms of advertising, as opposed to ever turning  
24 over the management of the establishment to a  
25 third party to host an event there.

1 MR. BRYANT: Correct.

2 MEMBER GRANDIS: So I understand, the  
3 purpose of a promoter is more like marketing and  
4 not -- and not running a special event itself?

5 MR. BRYANT: Correct.

6 MEMBER GRANDIS: Okay. Thank you.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Any other  
9 questions anyone else wants to ask?

10 MEMBER CROCKETT: This is Ms.  
11 Crockett.

12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Go ahead, Ms.  
13 Crockett.

14 MEMBER CROCKETT: Can you please  
15 explain your process for infusing your tobacco  
16 products with CBD, and if that's done in-house,  
17 if it's done outside, where are you getting your  
18 CBD products, are they FDA approved and tested,  
19 and things of that nature.

20 MR. BRYANT: Sure. Ms. Wilson, are  
21 you on still?

22 MS. WILSON: Yes, I'm back. Hello,  
23 this is Kara. So as far as the hookah goes, of  
24 course these are not things that are mandatory  
25 for you to purchase. This is definitely a

1 lifestyle thing, a lifestyle choice. And as far  
2 as the CBD oil goes, we add those drops in-house  
3 to the shisha when they order it. It's not  
4 mandatory. It doesn't come with every hookah.  
5 It's by choice, so it's an add-on.

6 Does that kind of clear it up for you  
7 a little bit, how we make it? So it's a bottle  
8 of -- it's a bottle of drops that we get from  
9 Charlotte's Web, which is the largest CBD  
10 company, and we just add those to people's shisha  
11 bowl as they order it.

12 MEMBER CROCKETT: Thank you,  
13 Ms. Wilson. Yes, I'm familiar with Charlotte's  
14 Web. Thank you for clarifying the process.

15 MS. WILSON: You're welcome.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Let me ask Mr.  
17 -- both Mr. Morris and Mr. Bryant. Are you aware  
18 that -- and, I mean, we are -- that at least in  
19 D.C., as of July of 2018, that the Department of  
20 Health has considered -- considers cannabinoid a  
21 form of cannabis, and that, therefore, both THC  
22 and CBD cannot be present in food and beverage  
23 items in the District, or the items will be  
24 considered adulterated?

25 So if that's -- so if the -- if the

1 Department of Health considers -- and that's  
2 currently, I mean, although this agency is  
3 currently regulating cannabis as a medical --  
4 well, medical as of October, and once adult sales  
5 is -- is legalized, then we will regulate those  
6 sales.

7 But at the same time, until we change  
8 the -- if we need to change it, the regulations  
9 or the law, current law says that we cannot add -  
10 - CBD is considered, at least by the Department  
11 of Health, by the current regulations that are  
12 out, that it's considered cannabis and that  
13 that's illegal in D.C.

14 MR. BRYANT: Yes.

15 MS. WILSON: I can answer this  
16 question. This is Kara.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, go ahead.

18 MS. WILSON: Our products currently  
19 contain no THC. But also, we have two locations,  
20 Birmingham and Miami, that do not serve hookahs  
21 at all. So if that's the case, if that's what  
22 needs to happen as far as them getting their  
23 license through, we can definitely consider that  
24 option, because we do have two locations that are  
25 in similar situations where they cannot even have

1 hookah at all.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So tell me  
3 about -- so tell me about the locations that --  
4 as I said -- remember, as I said to you, that we  
5 can -- in theory, we could grant you a license,  
6 but we cannot approve hookah because that's from  
7 a different agency. So

8 MS. WILSON: Yes, of course.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so how do  
10 -- tell me, since you mentioned these other  
11 establishments, so these are the establishments  
12 that -- in other states who are unable to -- I'm  
13 sorry, to get into the franchise because they are  
14 unable to serve hookah. How does that -- how  
15 does that impact the business model?

16 MS. WILSON: Well, we consider our  
17 hookah sales only at 10 percent, so what we do is  
18 just completely take that off the menu. It  
19 really doesn't affect their sales at all because  
20 they can still do the drink menu and the small  
21 plates, which is really the high ticket items  
22 anyway.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But isn't that  
24 -- but here knowing, then, if Cru is Cru Hemp  
25 Lounge, what does that entail? I mean, if I --

1 if I go online and look up the Cru Hemp Lounge,  
2 what does that -- what does that tell me? Is  
3 that the same name

4 MS. WILSON: Okay. If you're

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry. Go  
6 ahead.

7 MS. WILSON: Oh. I was going to say,  
8 if you're familiar with the brand and with the  
9 name because you've been to other locations,  
10 you're really going to probably be going to  
11 another city to get that same atmosphere.

12 Again, it's a decoration. We have  
13 leaves and it's like you're in a whole different  
14 world inside. It's not like a regular, you know,  
15 establishment. It's really decorated very well,  
16 and people love to take pictures and it becomes a  
17 whole Instagrammable moment.

18 So even without the hookah present, it  
19 still gives that same, you know, quality  
20 entertainment because you're still going for the  
21 same drinks and still the same menu, same food.  
22 It's just they don't sell hookah. That's the  
23 only difference. And it will be put online which  
24 locations do not have that, so customers will  
25 already know that they can't get that in that



1 location.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. So what  
3 -- again, what locations are you stating doesn't  
4 currently offer hookah?

5 MS. WILSON: Birmingham and Miami.  
6 Birmingham, Alabama, and Miami, Florida.

7 MR. MORRIS: Mr. Chairman, may I  
8 interject very briefly?

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Mr.  
10 Morris.

11 MR. MORRIS: I just wanted to just  
12 note in my work with these applicants that they  
13 are aware -- they are aware of the separate  
14 legalities with regard to offering hookah. And  
15 as Ms. Wilson mentioned, hookah is -- and  
16 Mr. Bryant at the start, it is 10 percent or less  
17 of total sales.

18 And I think Mr. Bryant also said, to  
19 the extent that the hookah is infused with CBD,  
20 that is also a sub-fraction of that. So, really,  
21 with respect to the locations that are -- most of  
22 the locations that are currently open, including  
23 the ones that Ms. Wilson mentioned, the Cru Hemp  
24 aspect of it right -- right now is primarily a  
25 branding thing as opposed to a descriptive

1 element of what they are offering.

2 And there is some forward-looking to  
3 when things change and there might be able to be  
4 a broadening of offerings with respect to these  
5 sorts of products. But at this point, that is  
6 very much aspirational as opposed to what is  
7 going to be operational at the start. So I just  
8 wanted to clarify that point a little bit.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Then, so it's  
10 aspirational. So if -- tell me, you're aware of  
11 the state of the law, in the sense of CBD,  
12 hookah. If we were -- if there are issues with  
13 the Department of Health -- and, again, this  
14 hookah exemption -- and you're aware of the state  
15 of the law currently as far as CBD, if we're to  
16 grant this -- if we're to grant this license  
17 tomorrow, what's your business model going to be  
18 like?

19 MR. MORRIS: It would be an eating and  
20 drinking establishment. As Mr. Bryant mentioned,  
21 it would be probably about 50 percent food, about  
22 50 percent alcohol, and it would be everything  
23 that has been described of an intimate atmosphere  
24 where people come down for a two-hour  
25 reservation, they sit, they eat, they mingle,

1 they enjoy the tremendous atmosphere, and then  
2 the only thing that's missing from it is the  
3 hookah aspect.

4 And, as you mentioned, the hookah only  
5 makes up about 10 percent. So a lot of the  
6 patrons of these establishments, as I understand  
7 it, don't even partake in the hookah. They come  
8 just for the food and beverage and the atmosphere  
9 and the service, and that would be the primary  
10 focus.

11 And then as time went on, and as  
12 things changed, and if the laws changed and the  
13 current trajectory that we see were to continue  
14 and the rules were relaxed, the idea is that this  
15 concept would be well positioned in the  
16 marketplace to take advantage of that, even if  
17 they're not able to take advantage of it at the  
18 outset were the Board to grant this license.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Let  
20 me -- I want to go back to your reservation  
21 system. And I know it's reservation, and I'm  
22 walking -- you're aware of H Street, and I know  
23 that you chose H Street for the location, what  
24 H Street has to offer. And I see this Cru Hemp.

25 And I'm walking with my -- with my

1 buddies, and I see Cru Hemp Lounge, and I want to  
2 -- I want to -- I'm sorry. It appears that,  
3 Mr. McKinley, you have -- are you on an airplane?

4 MR. MCKINLEY: Not currently. I'm  
5 currently sitting in the airport lobby, but I  
6 managed to get some connection, so I'm here.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. Can you  
8 introduce yourself for the record? No. I  
9 thought -- I was going to -- if you have  
10 something to say, say it now. Introduce  
11 yourself for the record, sir.

12 MR. MCKINLEY: Dennis McKinley, D-E-N-  
13 N-I-S, McKinley, M-C-K-I-N-L-E-Y. I'm the  
14 founder of Cru Franchise Company, which operates  
15 as Cru and Cru Hemp Lounge.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So you are the  
17 one who founded the one in -- started in Atlanta?

18 MR. MCKINLEY: Yeah. We've been open  
19 in Atlanta about -- yeah, we've been open in  
20 Atlanta 10 years, going on 11 years in November.  
21 You know, I've been listening to the call.

22 I mean, Cru is really a cult  
23 following. We are currently -- and I'm not  
24 trying to brag or boast, but I want you to  
25 understand how important this is to

1                   CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: This is your  
2 opportunity, sir, to talk about -- you're trying  
3 to convince us to give us -- give you a license,  
4 so of course, go ahead and brag.

5                   MR. MCKINLEY: Yeah. No, seriously.  
6 I think -- I appreciate that. But you guys have  
7 got a famous hot dog restaurant in D.C., and I  
8 will tell you that the same way that people hear  
9 about the hot dog restaurant in other cities,  
10 when they say, "Hey, when you go to D.C., you've  
11 got to go there," that's how they feel about Cru,  
12 you know, as an entertainment venue in every  
13 urban city in this country. And that's why we  
14 are excited to get to the District of Columbia.

15                   As you know, Atlanta is, you know,  
16 probably the number one tourist destination for  
17 millennials, urban professionals, especially  
18 black urban professionals in this country. When  
19 they come and experience Cru, the first thing  
20 they ask us is, why isn't there a Cru in our  
21 city? That's why we started to franchise the  
22 concept in the first place.

23                   So we think it's a restaurant similar  
24 to what you find in Las Vegas like the Hard Rock,  
25 some other venues. That's what Cru has built its

1 name off of.

2 Now I know there has been some  
3 confusion about what Cru Hemp Lounge means.  
4 We've had these conversations, you know, many  
5 times before because there is some question marks  
6 about what hemp is, what CBD is, but we're not a  
7 cannabis, you know, company.

8 You know, Cru is an experience that  
9 whether you do consume smoking of any kind of you  
10 don't, our environment lends itself to freedom  
11 and expression of that culture. But  
12 surprisingly, you know, the tobacco-related  
13 products are not just -- they are not a huge part  
14 of our business.

15 You know, food and liquor and  
16 experience and really, to be honest with you,  
17 just the surname and what people hear about Cru  
18 is what attracts people to our locations. We  
19 have experienced, you know, tremendous growth  
20 from that.

21 I know they already told you we are  
22 almost up to 20 franchise locations, which is  
23 just unheard of in the bar industry. It's  
24 unheard of in franchise, and especially as it  
25 relates to our culture. I mean, there is not

1 another franchise company as it relates to being,  
2 one, black-owned; being, two, for the culture as  
3 it stands, which is very similar to D.C. That's  
4 why we chose D.C. It just doesn't exist.

5 So D.C. has received a huge amount of  
6 support from the community as far -- you know,  
7 all over the DMV, and they are looking forward to  
8 coming to visit H Street, because H Street  
9 already has a reputation of being somewhere that  
10 urban professionals can go and -- you know, and  
11 have a conversation without, you know, sitting on  
12 couches, without clubbing. And, you know, Cru is  
13 not a club. It's very much a social, intimate  
14 experience where people can come and either do  
15 business or have fun.

16 So I just wanted to add that I  
17 appreciate you guys giving us the opportunity to  
18 present, you know our concept. You know, we've  
19 been at this a long time. Like I said this is  
20 our 11th year in business. We are excited to have  
21 the opportunity to do business in D.C. and be not  
22 only a positive, you know, tax resource for the  
23 city, but also it's a place where people can  
24 come, you know, have fun in a safe environment  
25 without the stress of -- you know, of a club.

1                   So thank you guys very much.

2                   CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: The question I  
3 was -- and I think you're the better person to  
4 ask, Mr. McKinley. My friends and I decide to  
5 walk on H Street, and we see the sign for your  
6 reservation, so let's go check this place out.  
7 So how is it -- how do you deal with that? How  
8 do you deal with someone that's walking the  
9 street, I see your place, I'm with my friends,  
10 and I said, "Let's go check this out," if you  
11 only do a reservation system, how does that work?

12                   MR. MCKINLEY: Well, it's really fear  
13 of missing out, right? You know, we get this  
14 question a lot. Well, I came to the door, but I  
15 wanted to get a table, you know, but Cru is  
16 reservation only. You know, if you really want  
17 to check out Cru, and you really want to  
18 experience, you know, Cru, if you -- if there's  
19 room at the bar, please sit at the bar.

20                   But the next time you're walking down  
21 H Street, reserve a table, so you can really get  
22 the full experience. And that has worked for us,  
23 you know, since the beginning. But really, you  
24 know, look, reservation systems are not about,  
25 you know, declining business or, you know,



1 creating unhappy consumers.

2 Really, at the end of the day, it's  
3 all about cash. With a reservation system, I  
4 know exactly how much money we're going to make  
5 that night. I know exactly how much staff I  
6 need. I know exactly how much product I need  
7 from day to day. You know, reservation systems  
8 are really about controlling the economics of the  
9 business more than anything else.

10 So, you know, we hate to turn people  
11 away at the door, but every night, you know, it's  
12 not a guessing game. We know how many people are  
13 coming to Cru on a daily basis, how much money  
14 they're going to spend per hour, and that's why  
15 we have been successful. That's how we got to  
16 this point.

17 So reservations are really more about  
18 economics than anything.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I mean, in the  
20 sense that -- that if I'm -- if my friends and I  
21 are walking down the street and I see the Cru  
22 Hemp place, and I said, "Hey, you know, I've  
23 heard about this. I saw it on Instagram." And I  
24 can go check it out. I can walk in, and if you  
25 have space, you'll let me in. That's what I'm

1 trying to find out.

2 MR. MCKINLEY: Yes, sir. We have --  
3 we have availability. Sometimes people cancel.  
4 Some people don't show up. You know, sometimes  
5 people just want to sit at the bar. You know,  
6 most definitely we'll try to accommodate you. We  
7 have a 15-minute grace period. Some people are  
8 late, you know, so there's always an opportunity,  
9 but reservations are definitely suggested. And  
10 that's the best way to experience Cru as a brand.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.  
12 Now, that's -- thank you for that because I think  
13 that was an issue that at least we had in the  
14 sense of a reservation, in the sense of walking,  
15 is that allowed.

16 I mean, I'm -- so far I'm glad that we  
17 had this fact-finding, because you have provided  
18 a lot more information than I was aware. I mean,  
19 at least for me, I saw -- I saw this name, and it  
20 said one other thing, but at least this -- it's a  
21 little bit more informative in a sense. So  
22 whatever decision the Board makes, at least we'll  
23 be making an informed decision because we have a  
24 lot more information.

25 Is there any other question that any

1 other Board member wanted to bring or ask?

2 MEMBER SHORT: Yes. I'd like to ask  
3 a question. I guess Mr. McKinley could answer  
4 this better than anyone.

5 So, Mr. McKinley, there is a third  
6 floor in the building that you are going to be  
7 opening your establishment in, if you are granted  
8 a license, correct?

9 MR. MCKINLEY: This is Dennis  
10 McKinley. Mr. Short, yes, sir, that's correct.

11 MEMBER SHORT: Okay. Now, do they  
12 sell alcohol on the -- on the -- do they have an  
13 ABC license also?

14 MR. MCKINLEY: On the third floor,  
15 yes, sir.

16 MEMBER SHORT: So if someone doesn't  
17 have a reservation for your place, but they  
18 happen to walk up, like Chairman Anderson, and  
19 decide to come up, and -- and they have to pass  
20 by your place to go to the third floor, correct?

21 MR. MCKINLEY: Yes, sir.

22 MEMBER SHORT: Does the third floor do  
23 hookah?

24 MR. MCKINLEY: No, sir. The third  
25 floor does not serve hookah, nor do they sell

1 food. So actually in D.C. we do anticipate, you  
2 know, our percentages of food potentially being a  
3 lot higher, because the third floor does not  
4 serve food either. So we -- we expect to get a  
5 lot of that business by default.

6 MEMBER SHORT: Would you happen to  
7 know what the third floor's occupancy is?

8 MR. MCKINLEY: If I'm correct, they  
9 have a higher occupancy -- I think it's 110 --  
10 because they also have outdoor seating capability  
11 on the rooftop deck.

12 MEMBER SHORT: Okay. Do you know if  
13 they are a restaurant or a tavern, or what kind  
14 of business is it?

15 MR. MCKINLEY: I think you would  
16 consider them just a bar or a tavern --  
17 bar/tavern.

18 MEMBER SHORT: A nightclub?

19 MR. MCKINLEY: No nightclub. I mean,  
20 they promote beer, so definitely a different  
21 clientele than us. But definitely more  
22 tavern/beer-focused than spirits for sure.

23 MEMBER SHORT: Okay. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Is it Dirty --  
25 what's the name of the place? I mean, we could

1 MR. BRYANT: This is Michael Bryant.  
2 It's called Dirty Water.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Dirty Water.  
4 Okay, thanks.

5 MR. BRYANT: And they are more of a  
6 sports-type bar/tavern thing than

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: No, that's  
8 fine. We can -- I just want to -- I think -- we  
9 can get the information, so -- but I didn't --  
10 but since you mentioned it, Dirty Water is -- we  
11 can -- we can ask the agency to tell us about  
12 Dirty Water, so it's

13 MEMBER SHORT: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You gave us a  
15 name, so we're fine.

16 Go ahead, Mr. Short.

17 MEMBER SHORT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

18 Okay. I'm just really concerned, if  
19 there is -- and, Mr. McKinley or whomever of you  
20 can tell me -- does everybody have to come to the  
21 first floor? I was told you can exit from the  
22 second floor or the first floor, correct?

23 MR. MCKINLEY: That's correct. And I  
24 guess Attorney Morris can finish the statement.  
25 But, you know, when we did our due diligence, you

1 know, in regards to Cru, we only looked for, you  
2 know, locations that have already been through  
3 the alcohol licensing process, has already been  
4 granted approval, et cetera. So there is really  
5 no guessing game in regards to safety issues or  
6 liquor license issues.

7 So the second floor is already  
8 operated as a bar, so

9 MEMBER SHORT: Mr. McKinley, thank you  
10 very much. You mentioned you checked on safety.  
11 You hit the right button with me, then. Thank  
12 you very much.

13 That's all I have, Mr. Chair.

14 MR. MCKINLEY: Yes, sir.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.  
16 Thank you, Mr. Short. Any other questions by  
17 other Board members?

18 MEMBER GRANDIS: Mr. Chair?

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Mr.  
20 Grandis.

21 MEMBER GRANDIS: This is -- I'll throw  
22 this out for the three of you all. You mentioned  
23 that in Miami, and I think another location,  
24 because of their own restrictions there is no  
25 hookah. So is the business model pretty much the

1 same? It's more, like you said, it's coming for  
2 a lounge and like an intimate, small party to  
3 have small plates and -- and I guess specialty  
4 drinks.

5 MR. BRYANT: Yes. That's correct.  
6 I'm sorry, this is Mr. Bryant. That is correct.  
7 His system just went down for a second. Yes, it  
8 would be the same atmosphere minus the hookah.

9 MEMBER GRANDIS: Okay. And when did  
10 the Miami location open, and what's the address?

11 MR. BRYANT: I can provide you -- I  
12 can look up the address for you and get that, and  
13 they just recently opened a few months ago.

14 But, Ms. Wilson, if you're on, can you  
15 give me the exact date?

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm not sure if  
17 Ms. Wilson is still here, although I see -- but  
18 her phone is on mute, so

19 MR. BRYANT: I'll pull it up.

20 MEMBER GRANDIS: I only ask because in  
21 D.C., as you know, the issue of hookah and  
22 tobacco is handled by Department of Health, which  
23 would be no influence on ability to -- they make  
24 those decisions. So it may be that you open  
25 without certain -- without the hookah initially

1 because of their regulations.

2 I was just interested in how the other  
3 two operate. One was in Miami, and where is the  
4 other one?

5 MR. BRYANT: Birmingham, Alabama.

6 MEMBER GRANDIS: Birmingham. Thank  
7 you very much.

8 MR. BRYANT: Yes, sir.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Any  
10 other questions from any Board members? Hearing  
11 none -- yes, Ms. Wahabzadah.

12 MEMBER WAHABZADAH: I'm just curious.  
13 The establishments at Cru that don't have hookah  
14 in the other cities, what are the food and liquor  
15 -- what are the percentages of food and liquor  
16 sales generally at those locations?

17 MR. BRYANT: Generally, it is 50/50  
18 for their sales for food and beverages.

19 MEMBER WAHABZADAH: Thank you.

20 MR. BRYANT: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Any  
22 other questions by any other Board members?

23 I don't have any other questions. So,  
24 Mr. Bryant, Mr. McKinley, Ms. Wilson,  
25 Mr. Collins, Mr. Morris, all right, whoever



1 wanted -- who wants to speak, tell us

2 MR. BRYANT: Yes. So

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: -- any final  
4 comments that you want to -- you want us to  
5 consider in thinking about this application.

6 MR. BRYANT: I can answer one more  
7 question and then speak on that, Mr. Chairman, if  
8 allowed.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Go ahead,  
10 Mr. Bryant.

11 MR. BRYANT: Okay. Thank you. The  
12 location in my Miami has been open for 70 days,  
13 and their address is 1822 North 8th Street.  
14 That's the number eight. In Miami, Florida.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. All  
16 right. Now this is your closing, it's what --  
17 say whatever you want to say to bring this to an  
18 end.

19 MR. BRYANT: Thank you so much. So I  
20 just want to thank you guys for the opportunity  
21 to hear our concept and get an understanding of  
22 our concept. We truly appreciate your time. We  
23 hope that we have answered all of your questions  
24 to -- so that you can truly understand our  
25 concept and our vision.

1                   We look forward to joining the  
2                   community and making it work for the  
3                   reunification of the H Street as well as for Cru  
4                   and Wasted, Inc.

5                   Again, thank you for your time.

6                   Mr. Morris, if you have anything else?

7                   MR. MORRIS: Just very briefly, also  
8                   thank the Board for the opportunity to present  
9                   this morning. I know when we learned there was  
10                  going to be a fact-finding hearing we were  
11                  grateful that there would be a chance to present  
12                  to the Board and explain a little bit more. And  
13                  the Board has a lot of things that they have to  
14                  take into consideration in the granting of a  
15                  license. It's not something that is pro forma or  
16                  that just occurs.

17                  And we -- you know, I think that,  
18                  based on the presentation today, I hope that the  
19                  Board will conclude that not only is this  
20                  establishment a place that is suitable to have an  
21                  alcoholic beverage license -- it has in the past,  
22                  the physical establishment -- but that this  
23                  establishment itself will be, you know, an  
24                  accommodation to the public.

25                  It will offer something new to the --

1 to the residents of the District of Columbia. It  
2 will offer an upscale place for people to go and  
3 gather in a relaxed, safe environment, as  
4 Mr. Bryant mentioned. I think I -- I hope the  
5 Board also concludes that these individuals --  
6 you know, Mr. Bryant in particular -- is very  
7 well equipped for the responsibility of holding  
8 an ABC license here in the District of Columbia.

9 It has no -- this is not an  
10 undertaking that was -- that was entered into  
11 lightly or without planning and guidance and  
12 support. And we would hope that the ABC Board  
13 would allow this application to go forward, and  
14 we very much look forward to continuing the  
15 process, working with the ANC, working with the  
16 community, to make sure that -- again, that Cru  
17 Hemp Lounge is a good -- is a good neighbor and  
18 is a fine addition to the dining and nightlife  
19 scene in the District of Columbia.

20 So thank you again.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

22 Thank you. Mr. Bryant and Mr. Morris and  
23 Ms. Wilson, I want to commend you -- commend you  
24 for actually bringing Mr. McKinley in this  
25 process. And I say that because at least it was

1 his vision, and it brought more attention to the  
2 fact that here is a person who came up with this  
3 idea 11 years ago. And so at least he can  
4 explain to us what his vision was and what's  
5 going on.

6 And so I -- so I appreciate that. Let  
7 me say I appreciate that, that he was -- he was  
8 made available. And so it's -- at least it shows  
9 to me how serious you are about this or how  
10 serious that you are about addressing the  
11 concerns of the Board.

12 So I -- the Board appreciates that --  
13 that the founder was here, and so the local  
14 franchisees, the CEO, COO -- and, of course, I'm  
15 an attorney myself, Mr. Morris, so I'm not going  
16 to give you any credit. Okay? I'm an attorney,  
17 Mr. Morris.

18 (Laughter.)

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Ms. Wahabzadah  
20 is an attorney, so -- and Mr. Grandis is an  
21 attorney, so the attorneys don't count. Okay?  
22 So don't feel left out, okay?

23 MR. MORRIS: Fair enough, Mr.  
24 Chairman. Fair enough.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So we know that

1 you are always there, but I appreciate the other  
2 folks who are there, in all seriousness, because  
3 it says that here -- here it is that you brought  
4 folks who could answer whatever questions that  
5 the Board has.

6 And I -- the Board appreciates that  
7 because sometimes we ask questions and folks are  
8 not -- we don't have the proper people available  
9 to answer all of the questions that we have. And  
10 I just want to say that I appreciate the fact  
11 that I believe that, at least in my view, that  
12 all our questions so far have been answered  
13 because you had the appropriate people here,  
14 available to answer our questions.

15 So, again, thank you for appearing  
16 this morning. And the Board will take this  
17 matter under advisement and will issue a  
18 decision. The decision is to deny -- whether or  
19 not we are going to deny or whether or not we are  
20 going to placard it for the ANC and the community  
21 to participate in that process.

22 But that's the process that is going  
23 to follow. And whatever decision the Board  
24 makes, you know that it's going to be dependent  
25 on you getting -- as I stated before, we could --

1 we cannot approve a hookah lounge, so we can --  
2 we can issue an alcohol license, but we can't  
3 approve a hookah lounge. So, therefore, if  
4 you're going to have -- if hookah is a part of  
5 your business model, then you would have to get  
6 that license from -- from DCRA.

7 And the issue, when you're selling  
8 CBD, the law currently states that CBD is  
9 considered, at least the definition issued by the  
10 Department of Health, is that it's cannabinoid.  
11 It's cannabis, and so, therefore, it's a  
12 cannabinoid product. So, and you can't infuse  
13 that because it's illegal to -- it's currently  
14 illegal under at least the interpretation that  
15 was issued by the Department of Health.

16 But, of course, that is up to your  
17 attorney to make sure that you are aware of the  
18 current law, the current law and what's -- what's  
19 recommended or what's required here in the  
20 District of Columbia.

21 So that's all. So we'll take this  
22 under advisement. We'll issue a decision what  
23 the next step in this application process will  
24 be. Okay?

25 MR. BRYANT: Okay.

1 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So thank you  
2 very much.

3 MS. WILSON: Thank you so much.

4 MR. MORRIS: Thank you. We look  
5 forward to hearing from you.

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.  
7 Thank you.

8 MR. BRYANT: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay. Thanks.  
10 All right. So you guys can leave.  
11 We're going to continue on with our -- with our  
12 calendar.

13 All right. So thank you.

14 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
15 went off the record at 11:52 a.m.)  
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In the matter of: Cru Hemp Lounge

Before: DCABRA

Date: 03-24-21

Place: teleconference

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