

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

2 11:17 a.m.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: The next
4 cased on our calendar is a fact finding hearing
5 for Mirage. Mr. Orellana, can you please
6 elevate the rights of the parties in this case?

7 MR. ORELLANA: Sure thing. Yutong
8 Zhou, access elevated and Henok Girma, access
9 elevated. That is all, Chairman.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you,
11 sir.

12 MR. ZHOU: Good morning, Mr. Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Good morning,
14 Mr. Zhou. Can you spell and state your name for
15 the record?

16 MR. ZHOU: Yes, sir. It's Yutong
17 Zhou, Y-U-T-O-N-G Z-H-O-U, counsel on behalf of
18 licensee Mirage, INC.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Good morning
20 and is your client here this morning?

21 MR. ZHOU: Yes. Mr. Henok Girma
22 that's one of the owners of the licensee, he's
23 here with me today.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Girma,
25 can you please spell and state your name for the

1 record and your relationship?

2 MR. GIRMA: Good morning, I'm a co-
3 owner of Mirage, INC. My name is Henok Girma,
4 H-E-N-O-K G-I-R-M-A. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Good morning,
6 sir. All right, this is a fact finding hearing.
7 I just want to set the record straight. Fact
8 finding hearings are non-adversarial. The
9 parties are not under oaths. The Board cannot
10 order a party at a fact finding hearing to make
11 or take any specific action.

12 Basically, what the Board can do at
13 the end of the hearing it's either take no
14 further action or if we decide that we need to
15 have further information, then we'll have an
16 adversarial hearing, but we're just gathering
17 information.

18 Now, it is my understanding, sir,
19 that you received a license on September 12th,
20 2025 and to date, you have not opened. You have
21 not set up in metric system, the regulations
22 pursuant to 22-C DCMR § 5303.1 requires that a
23 registration for a medical cannabis business
24 shall return to the Board if it fails to operate
25 within 120 days after the registration has been

1 issued.

2 Mirage is requesting to place it's
3 license in safekeeping and open at another
4 location. I need to find out first and
5 foremost, sir, why is that we issued a license
6 and you've been sitting on the license because
7 you have not operated and now you're asking us
8 to approve a safekeeping request because you
9 want to move to another location.

10 MR. ZHOU: Yes, Mr. Chair, if I may
11 answer the question. So, in the beginning, the
12 process of applying for the license took a bit
13 because the CO took a long time. The building
14 didn't really have a CO, so we had to start from
15 scratch and towards the end of that, around last
16 September, my client, when he submitted a CO and
17 everything to the Board for the issuance of the
18 license, we reengaged with the landlord to
19 attempt to lease the space nearby that's now
20 1278, this would be 1280.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on, hold
22 on. You lost me some place.

23 MR. ZHOU: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right,
25 you're saying that a license was applied for

1 what address and what happened?

2 MR. ZHOU: 1278 5th Street, NE,
3 D.C., that's 20002. So, the license is issued
4 for this place, but around the same time, during
5 that period, we have reengaged the landlord as
6 well, because the landlord happens to own the
7 adjacent property right next to us, that's 1280
8 5th Street, NE. My client decided to extend the
9 premises to negotiate with the landlord to take
10 over that space as well.

11 Yes, we're requesting safekeeping
12 for the new location, but not necessarily a new
13 location, it's more so that we can expand into
14 the building right next to us. During this
15 time, that will be a huge financial undertaking,
16 so my client has been in touch with new advisors
17 as well to help fund this project, that's why
18 during this whole time, we only applied for the
19 employee badges. We only applied for the
20 vehicle things for the future, but my client has
21 not opened for business during this time.
22 That's the main reason.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But, if your
24 client wants to expand into a larger space then
25 they would have to apply for a substantial

1 change.

2 MR. ZHOU: Yes, that is correct, Mr.
3 Chair. However, to do so, we will also need to
4 provide the Board with the new lease for the new
5 space as well and we have not yet secured that.

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But, you
7 applied for a license for one location. Do you
8 have a lease? Is there a lease for 1278 5th
9 Street, NE?

10 MR. ZHOU: Yes, we do.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Have you
12 provided that lease to the agency?

13 MR. ZHOU: Yes, we did.

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, why is it
15 that your client -- so, what work, if any, was
16 done at 1278 5th Street, NE? When is it that
17 your client signed a lease for this property?

18 MR. ZHOU: We signed this lease in -
19 - sorry, the Board's indulgence, if I can check
20 the record. We signed the lease around July
21 1st, 2024. To answer the second question, a
22 substantial amount of work has been done in this
23 place because this place did not have a retail
24 certificate of occupancy.

25 For example, 1278 and 1280, neither

1 building had a foundation, so we had to dig --
2 open the front door area, the back door area.
3 Some places on the premises to build a
4 foundation into the area and there was no fire
5 safety in place, so we have to build a fire
6 system in place. The stairs were deemed to be
7 too dangerous by the DOB, so we had to re-do the
8 entire stairs and we had to redesign the spaces
9 to conform with a retail front space and storage
10 area regulations.

11 Because there was no drawing for the
12 place, we had to hire architects to redraw the
13 place and get it stamped by the architect and
14 DOB and the surveyor, so that we can properly
15 apply for permits for certain demolition and
16 certain construction.

17 A substantial amount of work has
18 been done to this place. In fact, my clients
19 have pictures of the place before and after and
20 we can provide that to the Board as well if the
21 Board would like to see this is a drastic
22 difference.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, what
24 information did you say you can provide to the
25 Board?

1 MR. ZHOU: Pictures of the place
2 before and after construction.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, is there
4 a -- do you guys have a certificate of occupancy
5 for 1278 5th Street, NE?

6 MR. ZHOU: Yes, we do, sir.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: How large is
8 this space?

9 MR. ZHOU: The space is around 2,500
10 square feet.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: How large is
12 the space -- all right, is there a current lease
13 for 1280 5th Street, NE?

14 MR. ZHOU: No, we're still
15 negotiating that. We're in the due diligence
16 period for that because the license, we learned,
17 at 1278 taught us that when the space doesn't
18 have a certificate of occupancy at all, there
19 will be substantial work done. So, we will have
20 engineers, architects to survey the place and we
21 have -- and actually the main goal is to
22 demolish the wall on the second floor, so we can
23 connect and attempt to apply for a safe use
24 treatment facility endorsement there. That part
25 does take time and we're still doing our due

1 diligence to see how feasible it will be.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right,
3 but if we were to -- think for example if the
4 Board was to approve the safekeeping, our
5 current safekeeping schedule would be through
6 September 30th. We're now in April, almost end
7 of April, May, June, July, August that's five
8 months. So, what's going to happen in five
9 months if the Board was to -- even if the Board
10 was to approve this request? I don't know what
11 is it that you're asking from the Board. Are
12 you asking the Board for safekeeping? Are you
13 also asking for the Board -- because in order
14 for you to move into another space, it has to be
15 a substantial change, that's subject to the
16 protest proceedings. So, you'd have to account
17 for it.

18 MR. ZHOU: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, we're now
20 talking about -- I don't know what the time line
21 is and so, therefore, now -- I can't even fathom
22 the time line for that -- just our process --

23 (Simultaneous speaking.)

24 MR. ZHOU: No --

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What I don't

1 understand if this building is nowhere close to
2 being ready, the second building.

3 MR. ZHOU: Right, that part is
4 correct. The building is nowhere to be close to
5 being ready that's the preliminary conclusion we
6 have reached so far. However, I think the
7 planned time line for us right now is to try to
8 get a lease negotiated, see how long of a rent
9 abatement or free rent period we can get because
10 of the work we'll do, because while we
11 underestimated that for the original space, we
12 have so that's subject to negotiation.

13 We would like the Board to approve
14 the safekeeping request so at least in this time
15 period, we're saying in the next three months we
16 can figure out the lease negotiation and put in
17 the application for substantial change. During
18 the substantial change, we will still maintain
19 as we begin the process with the Department of
20 Buildings because there will be quite a bit of
21 construction work being done, so we do not
22 believe that it will be safe to have patients or
23 anybody outside of the business to be on the
24 premises.

25 However, we will maintain and track

1 the substantial change application and the DOB
2 process to try to move along the process sooner
3 than later. During the same time, we can
4 negotiate with the local ANC to get a settlement
5 agreement, because in the beginning the ANC
6 missed the protest guideline for the original
7 application, so there was no settlement
8 agreement. I believe that negotiating for a
9 separate settlement agreement will take a little
10 bit of time as well there.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: At what point
12 did your client determine that, okay, I've
13 spent thousands -- based on the representation
14 you're making, I've spent thousands of dollars
15 to renovate 1278 5th Street. I have a
16 certificate of occupancy, but rather than me
17 opening my business, I'm going to expand into a
18 larger space and so therefore, it's going to
19 take me another -- I need to negotiate a lease.

20 I need to first and foremost
21 negotiate a lease with a landlord and then once
22 I negotiate a lease with the landlord, then I
23 need to go start the process of getting this now
24 new space prepared. When were these decision
25 made? I mean when --

1 MR. ZHOU: It was made around last
2 December, when we realized that there was no way
3 we could finalize the new lease or do the survey
4 in time, that's when we put in the safekeeping
5 request.

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Tell me,
7 what's your client's history in the cannabis
8 industry? What is their operating history look
9 like in this industry?

10 MR. ZHOU: For this client, there
11 are two owners, Mr. Girma he's here and then
12 there's another owner called Mr. An. So,
13 frankly, Mr. Girma didn't really have any
14 cannabis industry operating experience. He's
15 fairly new. He was a veteran. He decided to
16 join this business around the time in 2023.

17 However, my other client, Mr. An, he
18 has some experience in other states with
19 cannabis and that's how we can have the funds.
20 Mr. An has cultivation centers in Oregon and
21 that's where at least half of his focus is.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry,
23 who is this other person? Can you spell his
24 name for the record?

25 MR. ZHOU: Yes, it's Zeming An,

1 first name is Z-E-M-I-N-G and last name is An,
2 A-N.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And you're
4 saying that -- what's his background in the
5 industry?

6 MR. ZHOU: He has a cultivation
7 center and retail operations in Oregon, that are
8 licensed by that state. He has other partners
9 in that state, but they are not involved in the
10 D.C. operation.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You had
12 mentioned that your client was also -- in order
13 to move forward, your client would have to seek
14 additional investors to operate?

15 MR. ZHOU: Yes, yes. He doesn't
16 necessarily have to, but he would prefer it that
17 way.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I guess that
19 one of the questions that I have is that at
20 least your client, his operational history is
21 very scant in the industry.

22 MR. ZHOU: For Mr. Girma, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Right. A
24 significant amount of funds were spent to

1 now it's not like okay, the business is open and
2 operating and it's very profitable and let's
3 expand because we believe that we have the
4 customer base and we need to be in a larger
5 space. I mean I guess my concern is that you
6 have a space. You don't have a lot of
7 operational history, you have a space that
8 you've renovated that conceivably be could open
9 and be operational, but you decide to put this
10 on hold because I want to expand into a larger
11 space. I mean that doesn't make sense to me.
12 I'm asking why -- I mean that doesn't make
13 sense, so explain.

14 MR. ZHOU: For Mr. Girma, that's
15 true. He doesn't have extensive experience in
16 this space; however, Mr. An has extensive
17 experience in Oregon in terms of retail
18 operations. For this part, it is in their
19 business judgment that this location, especially
20 how it is laid out, the second floor potentially
21 turning into a safe treatment facility, safe use
22 treatment facility, it will potentially become a
23 flagship in the neighborhood of Union Market.

24 I'm sure as the Board knows, it's a
25 big neighborhood. It has quite a bit of

1 residential buildings. Huge luxury rentals.
2 For that place and specifically he believes that
3 spending this money down the line and
4 essentially come out with a bang. That will
5 make this space way more famous and viable in
6 D.C., in terms of Mirage's flagship operation.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I might have
8 some other questions. I am going to have some
9 other questions. This is an opportunity for the
10 Board Members to ask questions. I think you
11 have some questions, Mr. Meadows.

12 MEMBER MEADOWS: Good afternoon, Mr.
13 Zhou, how are you? Good to see you.

14 MR. ZHOU: Good afternoon, Mr.
15 Meadows.

16 MEMBER MEADOWS: I'm a little
17 perplexed also. When you had the permit and you
18 expended your funds to renovate, you had to lay
19 a new concrete floor is what I understand, but
20 you failed to open up in that 1278 spot. Now,
21 I'm hearing that you are looking to expand next
22 door and my understanding is those buildings
23 near Union Market, you know, they were probably
24 built 100 years ago possibly. I just can't
25 envision because they're all single story, that

1 you now are planning to expand a second floor.
2 None of them, to my knowledge, have second
3 floors.

4 Let me ask you, when you did the
5 renovations at 1278, did you also renovate 1280
6 and lay a new floor over there?

7 MR. ZHOU: No, no, we did not
8 because we didn't have the possession of 1280.

9 MEMBER MEADOWS: Okay.

10 MR. ZHOU: We are trying to get
11 possession. Also, I understand what the
12 buildings look like from the outside --

13 MEMBER MEADOWS: Yeah.

14 MR. ZHOU: They are only one floor;
15 however, on the inside, there was already a
16 second floor built out to the space. It's quite
17 tall. I'm not sure if, Member Meadows, you've
18 been to say, for example, the restaurants near
19 by. Quite a bit of restaurants near by also
20 have a second floor space, maybe that they've
21 turned into rooftop, to be turned into
22 additional dining areas, just addition space.
23 It depends on the specific layouts of a specific
24 address there. Some of them do, some of them do
25 not, even though on the outside, it all looks

1 like one story.

2 MEMBER MEADOWS: Yeah, well thank
3 you for clarifying that because just from my
4 observations and I've only been to one
5 restaurant on that strip and that's been
6 probably two years ago. So, Mr. An, A-N, Mr. An
7 is in Oregon. Is it a 50/50 partnership --

8 MR. ZHOU: Yes.

9 MEMBER MEADOWS: With these co-
10 owners?

11 MR. ZHOU: Yes.

12 MEMBER MEADOWS: Okay, all right.
13 I'm just curious why you can't move forward with
14 the space that you have a permit for and a
15 lease, a legal lease for, and then -- but you're
16 waiting to expand.

17 MR. ZHOU: Well, because for us it's
18 really a safety concern there as well because we
19 constantly would have engineers, architects come
20 to test all the spaces and that would become a
21 safety concern. We do not feel very safe to
22 open there. Obviously after we open, all the
23 visitors and folks will need to have badges when
24 they visit. You need to have these logs. That
25 will complicate the process quite a bit.

1 In terms of the new space, we have
2 taken a look at it. It's pretty much in the
3 same condition as when we started 1278, so
4 that's the main concern there.

5 MEMBER MEADOWS: Okay, but the
6 concern isn't financing. You are looking for
7 new investors. You're concerns --

8 MR. ZHOU: We are -- so, because of
9 this idea and Mr. An's other partners in Oregon,
10 we are interested in this because how we
11 presented it is we truly want this to be a
12 flagship operation in the District and we
13 expressed that interest and we did have that
14 talk; however, that's not completely necessary
15 to bring in new investors. Mr. An and Mr. Girma
16 have sufficient funds to realize this plan by
17 themselves, but I mean why would we say no to
18 additional money?

19 MEMBER MEADOWS: I understand.
20 Okay, thank you for answering my questions.
21 Thank you.

22 MR. ZHOU: Thank you, Mr. Meadows.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Any other
24 questions? Go ahead, Ms. Quinn.

25 MEMBER QUINN: Yeah, I just want to

1 give you an opportunity to help me understand
2 what's going on here, because this doesn't make
3 any kind of sense on first hearing.

4 I'm struggling to comprehend how it
5 has taken this long to get to this point where
6 you are still not open and rather than open, you
7 want to ask us for permission to hold the
8 license for a period of time, when from
9 everything you just said, it's clear you're not
10 going to be able to meet that deadline. So,
11 what are we really doing here? This just does
12 not make any kind of sense. So, help me
13 understand.

14 MR. ZHOU: Yes, so I mean we need to
15 ask for the safekeeping because the expansion
16 plan will require a substantial amount of work
17 to be done in the space. Like Mr. Anderson has
18 already alluded to, we will need to put in a
19 substantial change application and substantial
20 change application takes time as well.

21 I mean we are trying to track both
22 sides of the application with the DOB and ABCA,
23 so the ANC process can move along with the DOB
24 process. However, it simply takes time for a
25 place that does not have COO and one that's not

1 completely safe to receive patients. Does that
2 answer your question? I'm sorry if you can make
3 your question more specific I think I can --

4 MEMBER QUINN: I don't -- I think
5 it's not so much that the question isn't more
6 specific, it's that there isn't a good answer.
7 I mean frankly you've had, what I would think of
8 as a fairly generous amount of time to get this
9 done. You seem to be saying oh, well, we made
10 it, we could open, but we decided to pivot.

11 MR. ZHOU: Right.

12 MEMBER QUINN: And we're pivoting in
13 a direction that takes us back to not even
14 square one, square zero. You don't even have a
15 lease.

16 MR. ZHOU: Right, it --

17 MEMBER QUINN: So, I can't connect
18 those dots as to why we would say yes to this.
19 There just isn't a --

20 (Simultaneous speaking.)

21 MR. ZHOU: Well --

22 MEMBER QUINN: Just seems like
23 Board, I want to do something different --

24 MR. ZHOU: I think maybe something
25 we can do here is a fair short time compromise,

1 say like if we cannot provide a lease in two
2 months or something, then we have to open and
3 start the operation in this space. Then, say
4 down the line we do have the lease, then we'll
5 have this discussion again if possible. I think
6 that's fair.

7 Also on the other hand, I would like
8 to emphasize as well this is something that
9 falls fairly under the business judgment rule
10 that is Mr. Girma's and Mr. An's business
11 judgment.

12 MEMBER QUINN: Go ahead.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Are you done,
14 Ms. Quinn?

15 MEMBER QUINN: I'm done, yeah, I'm
16 done.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I mean and
18 that is the same question that we have is that
19 your client, their experience in this business
20 is limited. It's extremely limited.

21 MR. ZHOU: Well, one of them is.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, I said
23 your client, the person that is with you.

24 MR. ZHOU: Yeah.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Girma, I

1 think?

2 MR. ZHOU: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: That we have
4 agreed that his business experience is limited.
5 You have spent all this money, I understand that
6 okay, I guess you're trying to change this into
7 a safe use treatment facility, that's what you
8 want to do?

9 MR. ZHOU: Uh-huh.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But as I've
11 stated before, it's not like you're open and
12 you're asking for a substantial change because
13 you want to expand. It's oh by the way, my goal
14 is to do a safe use treatment facility. I don't
15 have a lease yet for this other location and so,
16 therefore, I was supposed to open with -- the
17 law says that I'm supposed to open within 120
18 days, that date has gone.

19 You haven't opened. You allegedly
20 have a certificate of occupancy, so you have the
21 build out, so this place could be open tomorrow
22 or whatever. Since you have a certificate of
23 occupancy there is a potential for this place to
24 open, but you're preventing someone else from
25 opening. You're preventing us --

1 (Simultaneous speaking.)

2 MR. ZHOU: Oh --

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on,
4 you're also preventing another licensee, who
5 might be ready and able to open from opening.
6 So, therefore, you have not opened within the
7 statutory time lines. Now, you're asking us to
8 give you -- to put your license in safekeeping.
9 The initial safekeeping would be for six months,
10 so therefore, if we were to grant it, that would
11 be only through September 30th, 2026 and then
12 you have to come back again, make another
13 request for safekeeping, which could conceivably
14 be until March 31st, 2027, and based on the
15 amount of time it took for you guys to get 1278
16 in order, and I know to make a safe use
17 treatment facility, I mean that is even more
18 involved in the sense that you have to work with
19 the Department of Health or whoever you have to
20 work with to make sure that the insulation and
21 all of that. It is not apparent that -- we are
22 probably talking another couple of years before
23 this business can open.

24 MR. ZHOU: Mr. Chair, I first want
25 to point out as to the 120-day deadline matter,

1 we did submit the safekeeping request before
2 that ended. We submitted the safekeeping
3 request on January 20th, 2026. It is close to
4 the deadline, but that's why we submitted it
5 during that time period, it was right around the
6 corner for the deadline to open. Yes, I agree
7 with you that all of these efforts will take
8 time; however, for safe use treatment facility
9 as well, that's highly dependent on ANC. We're
10 not sure if ANC will support it. If the ANC
11 doesn't support it, we have to go through
12 protest, then during that protest, that's when
13 we will determine okay, should we actually
14 pursue this and do all the things with the
15 Department of Health and obtain additional
16 authorization from DOB.

17 These are, as I'm sure the Board has
18 experienced quite a bit, the interagency
19 involvement with not only just medical cannabis
20 or with the safe use facility is substantial.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: The
22 regulation specifically states 22-C DCMR 5303.1,
23 a registration for a medical cannabis business
24 shall be returned to the Board if it fails to
25 operate within 120 days after the registration

1 has been issued. That's what the regulation
2 says. It shall be returned to the Board. So,
3 you're asking for it not to be returned to the
4 Board. I am not going to open the location that
5 a license was granted. I'm also going to apply
6 for a substantial change which you have not
7 done. I don't know. I don't know. I mean I
8 don't know.

9 MR. ZHOU: Well, I think maybe
10 because I've watched many hearings for this,
11 maybe what we can do here is the Board can give
12 us a deadline and then we'll agree to the
13 deadline. We'll be held to the deadline and
14 then if we cannot fulfill that -- well, I guess
15 then we'll have an adversarial hearing.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yeah, but the
17 issue is that you can sign a lease and if the
18 ANC, as you stated that you lucked out in the
19 sense that the ANC missed the deadline so that
20 is one of the reasons why the initial license
21 was not protested because the ANC missed the
22 deadline.

23 So, now you're asking for -- now
24 you're doing a substantial change. It again has
25 to be advertised and the ANC, I'm not sure if

1 you'll be fortunate enough that the ANC is going
2 to miss the deadline again.

3 MR. ZHOU: Well, Mr. Chair -- I'm
4 sorry.

5 (Simultaneous speaking.)

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: No, they
7 might protest a substantial change and they
8 might come to say you shouldn't even give them a
9 license because this is not appropriate for the
10 neighborhood, whatever the standard. Don't
11 quote me on that, but the standard for an ANC to
12 protest a cannabis license because it's
13 different from alcohol, so let me not state it,
14 but the ANC can still protest.

15

16 MR. ZHOU: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so, they
18 can protest a substantial change and the Board
19 can determine that we're not going to grant the
20 substantial change. So, where would that leave
21 you?

22 MR. ZHOU: Well, that would leave us
23 back to operating medical cannabis retailer
24 without the endorsements and with only the
25 endorsement we have. However, on the other

1 hand, in a sense we did luck out, as the Board
2 knows, I represent quite a few clients in the
3 District, but from my experience the
4 conversation with ANCs is generally positive,
5 because my client will need to show up to the
6 ANC meetings to present the idea, to get to know
7 the neighbors, to get to talk to the
8 commissioners about settlement negotiations. I
9 actually get to know the surroundings even
10 better than from what we do in our research in
11 the business sense.

12 I wouldn't say it's a matter of luck
13 or not, it's a matter of diligence in the end.

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What is it
15 that --

16 MR. ZHOU: Oh, I'm sorry, let me add
17 one more thing as well.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes.

19 MR. ZHOU: For the ANC part as well,
20 I'm fairly convinced that if we invite the local
21 ANC members to the premises to visit the second
22 floor and see how it can be set up, I'm fairly
23 convinced that they would see how this is a
24 viable plan. You know, with the HVAC, with
25 insulation, with the smell control because it's

1 a fairly large space, I'm fairly convinced that
2 once they see it, they'll be behind it.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But, as I've
4 stated before, this gives them an opportunity to
5 protest even the issuance of the initial license
6 by saying that this is not an appropriate
7 facility in the location. Since they never got a
8 chance before, now that you're asking for a
9 substantial change, because you have to ask for
10 a substantial change, they can come and say
11 okay, we don't want -- we don't think this is
12 appropriate. I don't know.

13 MR. ZHOU: However, I think
14 eventually once we renew the license, I'm sure -
15 - obviously, I know on the alcohol side that's
16 true. When we renew, they will have their input
17 again, so we will face that issue eventually
18 anyway.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yeah, but
20 you're going to face it -- you're going to face
21 that issue on the substantial change.

22 MR. ZHOU: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay? You're
24 going to -- because it's not -- you're asking
25 for safekeeping of the initial license and then

1 you also have to come back to us, but if you're
2 able to sign a lease then you have to come back
3 to us and request a substantial change.

4 MR. ZHOU: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And we'd have
6 to notify the community.

7 MR. ZHOU: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And that's
9 subject to protest.

10 MR. ZHOU: Yes and subject to more
11 documents and probably one more fact finding
12 hearing.

13 (Simultaneous speaking.)

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so,
15 therefore, since you have not submitted an
16 application as yet, even if the Board was to
17 agree to the safekeeping, then you have to come
18 back to us again and request another safekeeping
19 past September 30th .

20 MR. ZHOU: I will concede that
21 that's probably likely because --

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: It's not
23 probably likely, it is --

24 MR. ZHOU: Highly likely.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You have not

1 submitted -- you have not signed -- okay, so
2 therefore, what you are proposing, oh give you
3 two months to try to get a lease. If we don't
4 get a lease, this is going to happen, but okay,
5 two months to sign a lease then after two
6 months, then you have to request and file a
7 substantial change application. Once it's
8 filed, then that's subject to the 45-day protest
9 period, so it's going to be a placard for 45
10 days.

11 MR. ZHOU: In practice, it's more
12 like 70 days.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, we're
14 talking about -- okay, so we're now in May, I'm
15 sorry, we're now in April, I guess to tell you
16 where my mind is. So, we're now in April, if
17 the Board was to give you two months -- April,
18 May, June -- June, so you would have to let us
19 know by June whether or not there is a lease and
20 so, yes, you sign a lease in June.

21 Then, you have to apply for a
22 substantial change which is -- I don't know what
23 it is, once you have provided us all the
24 documents, whatever the documents and the
25 application. The agency then needs to decide

1 whether or you provide the documents and is it
2 ready to be placarded.

3 June, July, August there needs to be
4 a placard for a 45-day period. August,
5 September, so probably in the middle of the
6 placarding period, this first request for
7 safekeeping would have expired and then you have
8 to come back again and ask for another six
9 months.

10 MR. ZHOU: Yes, that is the plan to
11 be honest because we will need to come back to
12 show good cause to see where we are at for the
13 substantial change application and then to see
14 where the DOB process is standing at.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, so
16 you already --

17 (Simultaneous speaking.)

18 MEMBER MEADOWS: Can I --

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Mr.
20 Meadows?

21 MEMBER MEADOWS: One more question,
22 Mr. Zhou, so you're lease that you signed in
23 2024, how long is that good for?

24 MR. ZHOU: That one is good for 10
25 years.

1 MEMBER MEADOWS: Okay. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What
3 information are you able to provide the Board
4 if, as I said before, I can't order you to do
5 anything. Would you voluntarily provide
6 information to the Board regarding whether a
7 work -- I don't know if you've provided the
8 agency with a copy of the lease that you have
9 for 1278.

10 MR. ZHOU: Yes, we'll provide the
11 Board the lease one more time and pictures to
12 show the work that has been done and then we can
13 try to hold ourselves to the deadline if the
14 Board agrees, the two-month deadline for the
15 lease. If that doesn't happen, well, then to be
16 honest for us, I need to have one more
17 discussion with my client as well about all
18 this.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Do you have a
20 certificate of occupancy for 1278?

21 MR. ZHOU: Yes, we provided that
22 prior to the issuance.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, when it
24 is that you could you provide all this
25 information to the Board? Again, I can't order

1 you to do it, this is if you decide to provide
2 information to the Board.

3 MR. ZHOU: So, for the lease and the
4 pictures and the certificate of occupancy, I can
5 provide that by tomorrow. For the new lease,
6 I'd say we'll try to do that by say June 24th,
7 if that works or the 22nd ?

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Any other
9 questions from any of the Board Members? I
10 guess I'll ask this, does your client currently
11 have any -- oh, I didn't ask this question, if
12 you had talked about your employee -- what
13 actions, if any, has your client taken towards
14 opening up this -- tell me specifically what has
15 been done? I mean in the sense of is there
16 metric training? Have you hired employees?
17 Tell me what specific actions has your client
18 done regarding --

19 MR. ZHOU: So, we applied for the
20 employee applications for several employees and
21 manager and all the employees and manager have
22 completed the Green Culture Certification
23 training. They all have that certification. A
24 few of them have completed the metrics training.
25 We also applied for vehicle registration with

1 the Board for the delivery endorsement.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: How many
3 employees did you anticipate or have you applied
4 for?

5 MR. ZHOU: I believe four. Is that
6 correct, Henok?

7 MR. GIRMA: About four.

8 MR. ZHOU: I think four, yeah and
9 two vehicles, I believe, yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Has anyone
11 undergone any training in metrics?

12 MR. ZHOU: I think two employees
13 have, I'm not 100 percent sure to be honest.
14 Henok, do you know?

15 MR. GIRMA: Two employees.

16 MR. ZHOU: Two employees? Okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Any other
18 questions by any of the Board Members? Any
19 other representation you want to make, sir,
20 before I close this hearing?

21 MR. ZHOU: No, Mr. Chair.

22 MR. GIRMA: I would like to add one
23 more thing. So, our plan is to have the biggest
24 in the city if not one of the biggest, if not
25 the biggest, dispensaries like a Starbuck's kind

1 of dispensary. That is our simple idea. That's
2 all I wanted to add. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you for
4 that representation, Mr. Girma. All right. The
5 Board will take this matter under advisement. I
6 don't know. We have to figure out what our next
7 step is, but we will take this matter under
8 advisement and let you know whether or not we'll
9 agree or whether or not we need to have a
10 contested -- whether or not pursuant to 22-C
11 DCMR § 5303.1, where it says a registration for
12 a medical cannabis business shall be returned to
13 the Board if it fails to open within 120 days
14 after registration has been issued. I don't
15 know. I'm saying that you can provide the
16 license, the certificate of occupancy and
17 pictures of the location by tomorrow --

18 MR. ZHOU: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And that
20 you're saying that you believe that you should
21 be able to provide the Board with a copy of the
22 lease by June 22nd. I will say I don't know
23 what -- I don't know where I am, but --

24 MR. ZHOU: Okay, I will at least
25 provide the information that I promised. Just

1 to summarize, it's the pictures, the lease and
2 the certificate of occupancy, correct?

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes.

4 MR. ZHOU: Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: The lease,
6 yeah and we'll -- hold on, yes. We'll take this
7 matter under advisement as to what the next step
8 is. Okay?

9 MR. ZHOU: All right. Thank you,
10 Mr. Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right,
12 thank you.

13 MR. ZHOU: Thank you, Members.
14 Thank you for attending. Appreciate it.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right,
16 bye-bye.

17 (Whereupon, the above-entitled
18 matter went off the record at 12:06 p.m.)
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25

1 C E R T I F I C A T E

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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