

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD
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MEETING

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IN THE MATTER OF: :
 :
The Weekend Social Club :
1540 North Capitol Street: Cease and Desist
NW :
ANC 5E :
 :
(Request for Hearing :
Regarding Cease and :
Desist - Board Order :
No. 2023-185) :
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Wednesday
April 26, 2023

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

ALSO PRESENT:

- BINYAM GEBREYOHANNES, Licensee
- JOSE ORELLANA, DC ABRA Staff
- INVESTIGATOR KEVIN PUENTE, DC ABRA
- INVESTIGATOR JEREMY ZOLLARCOFFER, DC ABRA

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

2 10:53 a.m.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: The next case
4 on our calendar is a cease and desist hearing for
5 an unlicensed establishment, it's called the
6 Weekend Social Club. And so Mr. Orellana, can
7 you please elevate the rights of Mr. Puente, Mr.
8 Zollarcoffer and also the licensee for the
9 Weekend Social Club, please?

10 MR. ORELLANA: Kevin Puente, your
11 access has been elevated.

12 Investigator Jeremy Zollarcoffer, your
13 access has been elevated.

14 Binyam Gebreyohannes, your access has
15 been elevated.

16 That is all, Chairman.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you.

18 Mr. Gebreyohannes, if you have a
19 camera, can you please turn it on, please, sir?

20 Mr. Gebreyohannes? Are you there,
21 sir?

22 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, can you hear
23 me?

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I can hear you,
25 sir. Do you have a camera you can turn on, sir?

1 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, I'm on my
2 laptop. However, I don't know how to use WebEx.
3 How do I activate the camera on here?

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You don't see
5 an icon there just to tell you to turn the camera
6 on?

7 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Start video --

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes.

9 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: HD User Facing,
10 Change, Self-Viewable Location.

11 Am I able to be seen now?

12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Not yet, sir.

13 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I see myself.

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, if you
15 can see yourself, we'll probably begin to see you
16 shortly.

17 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Okay, it says
18 (audio interference).

19 I'm on.

20 I apologize.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: That's fine,
22 sir.

23 (Audio interference)

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: If you're
25 having some video problem, we can move on. I

1 prefer to see folks, but if you don't have video,
2 we'll move on.

3 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Okay.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So
5 let me have the parties identify themselves
6 already. Let me start with you, Mr. Puente.

7 Please identify yourself for the
8 record, sir.

9 MR. PUENTE: Kevin Puente, K-E-V-I-N,
10 P-U-E-N-T-E, ABRA Investigator.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you.

12 Good morning, Mr. Zollarcoffer. Can
13 you please spell and state your name for the
14 record, identify yourself, sir?

15 MR. ZOLLARCOFFER: Yes, sir. Good
16 morning, chairman and members of the board. My
17 name is Jeremy Zollarcoffer, it's J-E-R-E-M-Y, Z-
18 O-L-L-A-R-C-O-F-F-E-R.

19 CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Mr. Gebreyohannes,
20 can you please spell and state your name for the
21 record, please, sir and your relationship to this
22 case?

23 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, sir. My name
24 is Binyam Gebreyohannes, B-I-N-Y-A-M, G-E-B-R-E-
25 Y-O-H-A-N-N-E-S, owner of the Weekend Social

1 Club.

2 CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: All right. Good
3 morning, sir.

4 All right, this is a fact-finding
5 hearing, sir. At a fact-finding hearing the
6 board cannot order a party to take any specific
7 action. The board it's informal and other
8 parties are sworn in, we are just gathering facts
9 to make a determination what is the next steps in
10 this case. I think in this particular case it
11 appears that the board issued a cease-and-desist
12 order which is Court Order No. 2023-185, because
13 the agency -- oh yes, I can now see you -- the
14 agency received notification from a neighbor that
15 there was a noise violation going on at the
16 address. The agency, the investigator went over
17 and saw that there was an event, and they
18 determined that there was not a proper license,
19 was not existent for that, on that, I think it
20 was on March 10th.

21 It's my understanding that another
22 investigator went back, and we also received a
23 noise complaint on March 11th, 2023, and another
24 one of our investigators went back and saw the
25 same thing that was occurring on March 11th. And

1 so the board issued a cease-and-desist. You
2 decided that you requested a fact-finding hearing
3 so you can explain yourself.

4 So what we're going to do this
5 morning, sir, is that I'm going to have the two
6 investigators share with the board what was
7 observed on March 10th and March 11th. The board
8 members are welcome to ask questions of the
9 investigator once the investigators have shared
10 their report. And once the board members have
11 asked questions of the investigators, then you
12 are welcome to ask questions to any of the
13 investigators. And then if you want to give us
14 your position or your business model and explain
15 to us what's going on, that is your option. Now,
16 at the end of the hearing, the options that the
17 board has to take, the board can decide that
18 there's no further action.

19 Well, I guess in this particular case
20 because the board had issued a cease-and-desist
21 so the board then can make a determination
22 whether or not it is going to lift the cease-and-
23 desist or whether or not it's going to keep it in
24 place until you have applied or received a
25 license. But as I said before, it's informal,

1 we're just gathering facts to determine what is
2 going on, your business model, and what action if
3 any the board should take.

4 Any questions, sir, before we move
5 forward?

6 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: No, I fully
7 understand, Chairman Anderson.

8 CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: All right, thank
9 you, sir.

10 All right, so I'll start. Mr. Puente,
11 were you the investigator who went on March 10th?

12 MR. PUENTE: Yes, sir.

13 CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: All right, so can
14 you tell us, share with us what happened on March
15 10th and why were you at the establishment -- I'm
16 sorry, the address on March 10th, please?

17 MR. PUENTE: Yes, sir. So about 11:00
18 p.m. on March 10th ABRA Supervisor Investigator
19 Jason Pruill received a hotline call regarding
20 1540 N. Capitol St. NW regarding loud music
21 emanating from the establishment. The caller
22 also advised patrons were entering and exiting
23 the establishment. I conducted a records check
24 and determined that there was no active ABC
25 license for that address; the last ABC license

1 was held in October 2021 and it was cancelled. I
2 did a record check for one-day licenses, did not
3 observe any one-day licenses being issued for
4 that address. I did a quick social media check
5 and found the club to be calling itself as the
6 Weekend Social Club which had an active website;
7 on the website it kind of showed a nightclub
8 inside 1540 N. Capitol. I then proceeded to the
9 Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection
10 website to confirm if there was a C of O. There
11 were two C of O's held for that address; the 1st
12 Floor for a fast food carryout for 12 people and
13 the 2nd Floor for office space only. So at that
14 time myself and Investigator Jeremy Zollarcoffer
15 went out to the establishment about 11:45, we
16 contacted D.C. Fire Marshal's office to have
17 someone respond as well based off the information
18 we gathered already. We arrived, we observed the
19 front door open, a security guard front door
20 advised us it was a private event, a private club
21 event birthday party. I advised him that there's
22 no such thing as private in the city. This spot
23 holds an active C of O in the public space. A
24 few minutes later Mr. Gebreyohannes came out,
25 along with his manager; I advised him the same

1 thing that there's nothing called private clubs,
2 especially when there's alcohol involved along
3 with a public space permit. I asked who's
4 providing alcohol, he advised me it was a
5 caterer. At no time could they produce a
6 catering license for us. Investigator
7 Zollarcoffer he went inside with the fire marshal
8 to conduct a walkthrough, and I'll let him speak
9 about that.

10 CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Sir, who did you
11 say you're going to have speak to --?

12 MR. PUENTE: Investigator
13 Zollarcoffer. He did the walkthrough inside with
14 the fire marshal's office.

15 CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Okay, on the 10th.

16 MR. PUENTE: Yes, sir.

17 CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: All right. So Mr.
18 Zollarcoffer, why don't you continue from Mr.
19 Puente left off, sir?

20 MR. ZOLLARCOFFER: Okay. Yes, when we
21 first entered the establishment on the 10th we
22 noticed that there was quite a few people on the
23 1st Floor consuming alcohol. I think there was
24 about 40-50 people the first night on the 1st
25 Floor. We seen people consuming alcohol,

1 dancing, drinking, kind of having a regular night
2 at the event space, appeared to be a night club
3 scene. And that's what I seen inside on the
4 first night.

5 I don't believe it was occupied on the
6 2nd Floor; it was just the second night that they
7 were occupying the 2nd Floor. But the first
8 night there were about 40-50 patrons there on the
9 first level.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, so
11 on the 10th, so what action, if any -- and I'll
12 start with you Mr. Puente -- so what action, if
13 any, did ABRA take on the 10th?

14 MR. PUENTE: Yes. So after conferring
15 with the fire inspector, we agreed that the venue
16 needed to be shut down due to the C of O only
17 listing 10 people, no more than 15 people inside,
18 and they had no alcohol license, no catering
19 license. So, by that time it was almost
20 approaching 2:00 a.m., so Mr. Gebreyohannes
21 agreed to shut it down and cleared it out. We
22 advised him that either he needed to get a
23 catering license or an updated C of O if he
24 wanted more people. Also, because the previous
25 spot which was -- the previous spot had a kitchen

1 in the back of the restaurant, so they kind of
2 removed that. So I said you can get the
3 occupancy increase, but you just need to go
4 through the proper channels to get the increase.

5 So yeah, the venue got shutdown,
6 everyone cleared out, so then fire, MPD and ABRA
7 left.

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. So
9 Mr. Zollarcoffer, what happened on the 11th?

10 MR. ZOLLARCOFFER: On the 11th,
11 similar thing; approximately 10:00 p.m.
12 Investigator Puente and Zollarcoffer arrived at
13 the establishment and observed the security guard
14 standing at the front door. Once again,
15 Investigator --

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Why did you
17 guys --

18 (Simultaneous speaking)

19 MR. ZOLLARCOFFER: We seen another
20 ABRA hotline called for noise and patrons
21 entering and existing the establishment. So
22 another ABRA noise complaint came in through our
23 hotline.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, so
25 what did you see once you got there on the 11th?

1 MR. PUENTE: When we arrived, sir, the
2 first thing that I noticed was the main entrance
3 door it was being obstructed with the roll-down
4 metal door on the outside and they had a side
5 entrance which was open. So myself and Mr.
6 Zollarcoffer approached, Mr. Zollarcoffer entered
7 security, shut the door and locked it. At that
8 time we didn't call for MPD assistance. Inside
9 there was approximately 150 people on the 1st and
10 2nd Floor. A lady came out and advised me it was
11 a retirement party/birthday party and she was
12 confused on why ABRA was there. Full
13 transparency, it was a bunch of off-duty MPD
14 officers. I advised them that this spot is not
15 properly licensed, there's no alcohol license,
16 there's no catering license. And they were
17 upset, the off-duty officers agreed that they
18 were going to leave because they didn't want no
19 issues. Inside just people pouring out from
20 upstairs and downstairs. Again, no catering
21 license could be produced or one-day license.
22 This time we dumped out all the alcohol and
23 everyone cleared out. Mr. Gebreyohannes wasn't
24 there the second night, his manager was Mr.
25 Mohammad, and I advised Mr. Mohammad of the same

1 thing the previous night that you guys can't have
2 an event here until your occupancy increase, or
3 if you do, it has to be less than ten people.
4 Then I advised them that the roll-down door
5 cannot be obstructing the front door, especially
6 with people inside and the front door being
7 locked.

8 We did take video of the second night,
9 if you'd like to see it, sir.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Sure. Mr.
11 Orellana, please allow Mr. Puente to share his
12 screen, please.

13 MR. PUENTE: Okay. Can you see my
14 screen, sir?

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes.

16 MR. PUENTE: So that's the video, sir.
17 As I pointed out, that's the main entrance there
18 being obstructed by the outside steel door. So
19 that was my main concern that they only had one
20 entrance in and out and it was through a
21 vestibule on the side, and with that amount of
22 people inside, something tragic could happen if
23 something were to happen. And I also want to
24 share the website with you, sir. This is the
25 website for the event space.

1 So as you can see it's advertised as
2 the Weekend Social Club, first level --

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm not seeing
4 the website, sir.

5 MR. PUENTE: Can you see it now, sir?

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: No. I saw it
7 briefly, but it disappeared, so.

8 MR. PUENTE: All right. How about
9 now?

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, this is
11 still a video I believe.

12 Okay. All right, this is a -- all
13 right.

14 MR. PUENTE: Yeah, this is the Weekend
15 Social Club site that I found which shows the
16 inside of the establishment, it advertises event
17 space, up here there's a rights and services for
18 the 2nd Floor which has 175 guests for the 1st
19 Floor, which I don't think you can go that high
20 based on my experience. The 2nd Floor as well,
21 75 guests which I think is a little too much
22 based on my experience as well. It has a
23 catering policy, there was no caterer on both
24 nights at the location.

25 That's it, sir.

1 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. So
2 Mr. Zollarcoffer, anything else you want to add?

3 MR. ZOLLARCOFFER: No, Mr. Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Any questions
5 by any board members of both investigators?

6 MEMBER SHORT: Yes, Mr. Chair. I have
7 a question, please.

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Go ahead, Mr.
9 Short.

10 MEMBER SHORT: Either one of you
11 investigators can answer this question.

12 Let's go to the first night which was
13 March 10th. What time did you get there on March
14 10th?

15 MR. PUENTE: We arrived about 11:45
16 p.m.

17 MEMBER SHORT: What time -- and also
18 you said there was a fire department person who
19 came out also.

20 MR. PUENTE: Yes, sir.

21 MEMBER SHORT: What time did the fire
22 department person get there?

23 MR. PUENTE: He arrived, I want to say
24 about 30 minutes after us, so closer to midnight
25 or a little bit after midnight.

1 MEMBER SHORT: What was determined
2 after the fire marshal got there on the 10th?

3 MR. PUENTE: He said the C of O said
4 exactly what I showed him, office space on the
5 2nd Floor and the 1st Floor no more than 15
6 people inside. And we agreed that with that
7 amount of people inside, it was -- they couldn't
8 have that many people inside, so we had to clear
9 it up.

10 MEMBER SHORT: Okay, so on that
11 particular night, the egress, how many doors were
12 available for people to enter or egress on the
13 10th?

14 MR. PUENTE: They had two doors open.

15 MEMBER SHORT: Is there a front and a
16 rear, or are they both on the side or?

17 MR. PUENTE: They're both on the front
18 side on N. Capitol Street.

19 MEMBER SHORT: So there's no rear?

20 MR. PUENTE: I didn't see any when I
21 was there.

22 MEMBER SHORT: So everybody coming and
23 going have to come in from N. Capitol Street?

24 MR. PUENTE: Yes, sir.

25 MEMBER SHORT: So, if there's an

1 incident on N. Capitol Street, how do people get
2 out?

3 MR. PUENTE: That's a good question,
4 sir.

5 MEMBER SHORT: Okay. Now, how about
6 let's go to March the 11th. What time did you
7 get there on March the 11th?

8 MR. PUENTE: We got there
9 approximately around 9:30 p.m.

10 MEMBER SHORT: What did you observe
11 when you got there on the 11th?

12 MR. PUENTE: They only had one door
13 open for egress and the egress on the main front
14 door was obstructed by the roll-down steel door.

15 MEMBER SHORT: How many people
16 approximately were in the building?

17 MR. PUENTE: I would say somewhere
18 near 150.

19 MEMBER SHORT: And the C of O that was
20 on the record says only 15 on the 1st Floor and
21 only office space on the 2nd Floor; is that
22 correct?

23 MR. PUENTE: Yes, sir.

24 MEMBER SHORT: Did the fire marshal's
25 office respond on the second night?

1 MR. PUENTE: I called them but they
2 didn't get out there until after. Since it was a
3 lot of off-duty cops, they agreed that they're
4 just going to shut it down because they don't
5 want no issues.

6 MEMBER SHORT: So again, when was the
7 cease-and-desist order issued?

8 MR. PUENTE: It was shortly after
9 this, about a week after.

10 MEMBER SHORT: Were they still
11 operating up until the cease-and-desist order
12 came in?

13 MR. PUENTE: I did not see them, we've
14 been monitoring it, but I know approximately two
15 weeks ago, two investigators went by on a night
16 shift and observed an event occurring, I believe
17 it was an illegal cannabis event.

18 MEMBER SHORT: So, in spite of a
19 cease-and-desist issued by ABCA officials, they
20 were operating illegally; is that correct?

21 MR. PUENTE: Yes, sir.

22 MEMBER SHORT: How did that night end
23 up?

24 MR. PUENTE: Let me check my records
25 real quick.

1 I believe the investigators -- I'm not
2 sure, sir. I'm having a hard time locating the
3 email that the investigators sent me.

4 MEMBER SHORT: Okay, so I guess what
5 I'm trying to find out is -- and knowing that
6 you're not a public safety expert -- but in your
7 time as an ABRA investigator, or ABCA
8 investigator -- do you think that the conditions
9 there were unsafe?

10 MR. PUENTE: Yes, sir.

11 MEMBER SHORT: And the fire marshal's
12 office did tell them to close it down?

13 MR. PUENTE: Yeah, after me and the
14 inspector conferred for a few minutes, he agreed
15 that it needed to end.

16 MEMBER SHORT: Has there been any
17 further monitoring by the agency since March
18 11th?

19 MR. PUENTE: Yes, sir. I've been
20 going by nightly when I work nights that I've
21 gone by.

22 MEMBER SHORT: Have you observed any
23 other activities there as far as illegal
24 activity?

25 MR. PUENTE: No, sir.

1 MEMBER SHORT: Thank you. That's all
2 I have, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for the
3 report.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Any other
5 questions by any other board members?

6 I just want to ask -- all right, no
7 other questions?

8 One final question before I transfer
9 it to the owner. Did either investigator have
10 any conversation with the landlord of the
11 property?

12 MR. PUENTE: No, sir. Not the
13 landlord.

14 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Okay, right.
15 Mr. Gebreyohannes, you're free to ask questions
16 of the investigators, or maybe you can explain to
17 us from your perspective what's going on, sir.

18 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: On 4/10 when the
19 two ABRA officials stopped by and stopped us
20 during our event, he did ask and request any sort
21 of licensing, and I did partner with Louis J.
22 Matsikis who owns a catering company. However,
23 unknowingly I didn't know it was based out of
24 Virginia; they had told me it was registered in
25 D.C. And this was the sheet I presented to

1 Official Kevin Puente, an attempt to show him
2 that we were operating in compliance. And then
3 he in return stated that this was not D.C.
4 registered company, he attempted to look up the
5 licensing under that name, and that's when I
6 found out we weren't running under correct
7 compliance. Up until then I was under the
8 assumption that I was running compliantly with
9 D.C. regulations.

10 Just a quick rundown on my business;
11 we are not a night club. We have a night club
12 setting or a bar setting; however, my business is
13 revolved around giving residents, all local
14 people, the space to rent by the hour, whatever
15 affair, which is mainly birthday parties. I have
16 plans such as KIPP DC, the other event that he
17 stopped the following day was a retirement and
18 50th birthday for MPD officials. I create a
19 safer space for residents/locals to throw a
20 private event which requires a guest list and it
21 usually maintains friends, family, co-workers. I
22 am less likely to have, you know, any type of
23 problems or issues at our establishment.

24 Now, after knowing that, the second
25 event following the 11th, I did allow, I did

1 mention this issue with my client for that
2 following day, and she mentioned had a caterer
3 who was also licensed in D.C. And she said that
4 they would just drop off food and presents.
5 However, miscommunication, the caterer was not
6 present, the food was not present, but even so
7 after finding out throughout the weeks that, you
8 know, you have to a caterer present, the food
9 present, license present -- this is my first
10 business in D.C. so it has been a hurdle learning
11 the rules and regulations here. Since then I
12 have not operated with any event that requires --
13 I was stopped on March 31st by the same two
14 officials that Kevin had mentioned; however, we
15 worked/partnered with Tony and Henry from Grub
16 Rockstar Catering who are registered in D.C. and
17 have a kitchen I think on 10th Street, if I'm not
18 mistaken. And that night we presented the
19 license, food was present, a receipt for alcohol
20 that was purchased by whoever was present, and
21 that was all confirmed by the two officials that
22 were there, and we were allowed to continue with
23 that event that evening. Following after you all
24 stopped on 4/20, with another agent was on a
25 Thursday, I think his name was Matt, Matthew. He

1 also then did his routine check-up of how, you
2 know, ABRA does, to make sure we're under
3 compliance. That event had no alcohol involved,
4 it was more of a vendor public style event. He
5 did his routine check and also checked out us to
6 continue for the evening. Those were the only
7 two days that ABRA officials came.

8 Aside from that I've only had kids
9 parties, 16 and under birthdays to just remain
10 compliant and stay afloat as far as my business
11 goes.

12 For compliance or just to update the
13 occupancy, I've been working with Daniel Calhoun
14 and Abdul Mizikir -- sorry if I'm not saying that
15 right -- in order to get the correct C of O and
16 up my occupancy load for both lists.

17 Aside from that, yeah I have not
18 operated for several weeks. The only two events
19 I've had was on March 31st and 4/20, and then
20 lastly on -- I'm sorry, on 4/23 which was recent,
21 which was also an event that didn't have any
22 alcohol involved or present.

23 Aside from that, yeah the business
24 that I have is, just revolves around private
25 event space. That's what I was trying to explain

1 to Officer Kevin Puente and his partner; we don't
2 operate like a night club. My main source of
3 income for this company is the space rental;
4 everything else would be a secondary source of
5 income. So right now I'm in the middle of, just
6 doing a temporary partnership with Grub Rockstar
7 Catering and then applying for my own license, if
8 I'm able to with ABRA being lenient enough to
9 remove the cease-and-desist so I continue the
10 process.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, let
12 me ask a question. So --

13 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I'm sorry to
14 interrupt. I do have a rear exit, they just
15 never went far back enough to check.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, so
17 on the 10th, so who purchased the alcohol on the
18 10th?

19 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Say that again.

20 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Who purchased
21 the alcohol on the 10th?

22 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I have my partner
23 who's a third-party member. I only rent the
24 space, everything else is third party.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Well, who, who,

1 who is -- all right, so you rent the space, but
2 whose event was it -- you said that you rent the
3 space, so who brings in the alcohol and the food
4 or whatever's served there? Who's in charge of
5 that?

6 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: At the time it was
7 Louis J. Matsikis, and then following after was
8 Tony and Henry from Grub Rockstar Catering which
9 was --

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So --

11 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Sorry.

12 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You're saying
13 on the 10th when we got there, there was a
14 Virginia caterer, that's what you're saying, and
15 I think you showed us some document, but you were
16 told that that person was not a licensed caterer;
17 is that correct?

18 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Correct.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Then on the
20 11th when there was another event when we went
21 there on the 11th, I was told that alcohol was
22 there. So who was the person who provided the
23 alcohol during that period?

24 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: That was just the
25 remaining alcohol from the present day. I just

1 wanted to make sure that the caterer that was
2 there was properly licensed in order to be able
3 to have it for consumption.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: But you know
5 you can't. All right, I'm not.

6 All right.

7 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: For me the rules
8 are all new. I'm just now finding out, you know,
9 all the rules and regulations for how this works.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
11 Now, our investigators testified -- and I know
12 you were not there on the 11th -- but the
13 investigators testified that -- all right, so who
14 provided security, who provided security for --
15 who provided security on the 10th and the 11th?

16 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I provide the
17 security for the establishment.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: You provide the
19 security.

20 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I am the security,
21 yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Now, why is it
23 that the security did not allow our investigators
24 to go in on the 11th? What was that all about?

25 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I have no clue.

1 I told them after hearing that situation, anytime
2 forward you must allow ABRA to come in and do
3 their job. The last two times that they did,
4 they did so. I gave them no issues, they walked
5 right in, Matt and the other two agents that were
6 on March 31st, 4/20.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Now, what is
8 the current occupancy of the building? I mean, I
9 saw the video; it looks like a large space, but
10 do you have an updated certificate of occupancy
11 for the building?

12 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: It's currently
13 pending process. If you may know, it does take
14 several weeks to several months in some cases.
15 When I first got both C of O's, one took nearly
16 two months, the other one almost three.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so, so the
18 current certificate of occupancy, what does that
19 state?

20 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: This one says 12
21 with a max of 27.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So if you have
23 a certificate of occupancy that says 12, how can
24 you have more than 12 people in the facility?

25 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Again, this is --

1 I didn't even know what that was on that sheet
2 until that day the first time we got stopped and
3 the fire marshal inspected. This is my first
4 business in D.C., a lot of this was new to me,
5 knowing the operator -- no real excuse, I am
6 learning as I go, that is the truth.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, so
8 you also stated that you're the one who hires,
9 provides the security. So who are these people
10 that you hire for security, where do they come
11 from?

12 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Local. One from
13 work, I have other like night club referrals.
14 Anthony just happens to be a good guy. I just
15 keep strict run North Capitol, I want to make
16 sure my clients are safe, these are private
17 events. So yeah, that's pretty much it.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So you're
19 having private events, but you're having private
20 events, sir, in that commercial space. If
21 you're having private events, because you're
22 having -- you can have a private event in a
23 house, in a private house and we do not have any
24 jurisdiction over a private house, sir. But if
25 you're having an event in a commercial space,

1 sir, you have to have a -- and if you're serving
2 alcohol, you have to have a license. You either
3 have to have a license, you either have to apply
4 to us for a one-day license or you have to have a
5 caterer who -- or you have to have a caterer who
6 provides the food and the alcohol is incidental
7 to the event. And that caterer has to be there
8 the entire time.

9 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Understood.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And if you --
11 you can apply from our agency for a temporary
12 one-day license. However, when you apply for a
13 license, even if you apply for a permanent
14 license, you have to give a certificate of
15 occupancy. And the agency would not grant you a
16 license for more than what's on your certificate
17 of occupancy. So if your certificate of
18 occupancy says 12, or if you come tomorrow and
19 apply for a one-day license, we're going to give
20 you if we think you qualify a one-day license for
21 12 people because the certificate of occupancy
22 says not more than 12 people can be there, or
23 whatever it says. So, your certificate of
24 occupancy you can't have our license, whatever
25 license that if we were to give you a license it

1 cannot exceed your certificate of occupancy.

2 That is what controls.

3 Now, we might say your certificate of
4 occupancy might say 100 people, but we might give
5 you a license that says 80 people. And if we
6 give you a license that says 80 people, if you're
7 going to serve alcohol, only 80 people can be
8 there and not 100.

9 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Understood,
10 Chairman.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, do you have
12 any idea, sir, when is it that you will get an
13 updated certificate of occupancy?

14 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I'm working
15 diligently now with two gentlemen that I've
16 mentioned. I've also requested my landlord's to
17 bear with me on rent for at least two months as,
18 you know, we're paying pretty high rent over
19 here. Hopefully within the next four to eight
20 weeks I should be able to have an updated C of O
21 with the occupancy load that fits more my
22 businesses.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Now, all right,
24 who was the caterer that was there on the 11th?
25 I know you said a Virginia caterer was there on

1 the 10th, so who was the caterer that was there
2 on the 11th?

3 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: It actually was
4 the same person that I'm currently partnered now,
5 Tony and Henry. But again, there was
6 miscommunication; their job was to just drop off
7 the food and they weren't present the entire
8 time. So therefore, no license or the owners of
9 the license were present, just the food.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So they just
11 dropped off the food. So, and you're using
12 alcohol that you had left over from the night
13 before?

14 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Correct, from a
15 previous caterer.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And that the
17 previous caterer from Virginia, so they're the
18 ones who went and bought the alcohol and brought
19 the alcohol?

20 (Simultaneous speaking)

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Now, you said
22 Tony and Henry. I mean, is it -- is that the
23 name of the catering company or individuals?

24 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: No.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What's the name

1 of the catering company?

2 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Grub Rockstar
3 Catering.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry,
5 what?

6 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Grub Rockstar
7 Catering.

8 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Grub Rockstar
9 Catering?

10 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: G-R-U-B, Rock
12 -- is it one word or two words?

13 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: It's two separate
14 words -- Grub, Rock.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Grub Rockstar
16 Catering.

17 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: While I'm
19 asking the question, could one of the
20 investigators check to see, is that the name --
21 all right, could one of the investigators check
22 to see if you find that name, Grub Rockstar
23 Catering.

24 So you're saying that these are the
25 people that you currently contract with to

1 provide alcohol and I guess whatever events that
2 you're having; is that correct?

3 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, under the
4 assumption that I'm able to continue business,
5 they are who I'll be working with. So in the
6 midst of the time that I was all looking for
7 (audio interference) and they're the ones that I
8 saw.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Now, you know
10 that even if you have a license caterer who's
11 going to come and provide alcohol and food, your
12 certificate of occupancy still says 12, you're
13 still going to have a problem?

14 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, I won't
15 operate until the C of O occupancy is fully
16 updated with the correct number. This is just a
17 number that they give us for the space that we
18 have.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Puente?

20 MR. PUENTE: Yes, sir. Grub Rockstar
21 Catering is active; it looks like they got their
22 first license in July 2022 and they just renewed
23 their catering license on March 13th, 2023 for
24 the next year.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, so

1 they are a licensed caterer in D.C., but as a
2 licensed caterer, aren't the supposed to provide
3 the food and the incident of alcohol, not just
4 drop food off? I'm not - I'll leave that open.

5 All right, before, let me see --

6 So, I want to ask you one more
7 question about the security, sir.

8 So, you said that -- how do you find
9 the security again, who you utilize for the
10 place?

11 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: That's been the
12 same gentlemen since we started the company. I
13 was referred from a friend who he works for. I
14 think it's a club on 9th Street, but I do
15 security because we require a guest list for our
16 event. Because we're not, you know, open to the
17 general public, let's say any member here had a
18 birthday party assuming we had an occupancy load
19 for like 50 people and you have 50 guests coming,
20 then the event takes place, security would check
21 ID, you know to initiate pat-down and make sure
22 you're on the guest list for the host event.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Any questions
24 by any board members?

25 MEMBER SHORT: Yes, Mr. Chair. I'd

1 like to ask a question.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, sir. Go
3 ahead.

4 MEMBER SHORT: Please forgive me, sir.
5 I'm not even going to try to pronounce your name.

6 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: No worries.

7 MEMBER SHORT: I'll just call you
8 Binzoner. Can you give us your background on
9 business of any type?

10 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yeah, so --

11 MEMBER SHORT: Anytime you've been in
12 business anywhere, even other than D.C.

13 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, I own Elite
14 Prints, that's in Alexandria, Virginia. You
15 know, I have a marketing background and we do
16 commercial screenprinting and embroidery. I have
17 a lengthy list of corporate clients, a lot of
18 schools, small businesses, but for the most part
19 that's just commercial printing, screenprinting,
20 embroidery. So my clients are also out there
21 like a PPW or PPR -- yeah, so they do like kid's
22 uniforms for basketball, Boys & Girls Club.

23 MEMBER SHORT: Okay, I'm trying to
24 stick with -- your business small here and
25 Washington D.C. and out, I don't think you'll be

1 printing anything out of your location.

2 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: No, no, no.

3 MEMBER SHORT: Let's stick with that.

4 Now, you sound like you've been educated quite
5 well and you speak quite well. Thank you for
6 that.

7 Now, didn't you have a clue that you
8 needed to read books or read the code and
9 regulations for the city before starting to
10 operate a business in the District of Columbia.

11 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Mm-hmm. To be
12 honest, I just went head first. When COVID came
13 by, my business went bad and I just did some
14 research on event space and chose a space.

15 MEMBER SHORT: Okay.

16 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Just to reiterate,
17 my business model is rental of space; anything
18 extra I try to outsource to third party, you know
19 whether it's food, beverages, decor, birthday
20 signs, it doesn't matter. My main focus --

21 MEMBER SHORT: Okay, that sounds
22 great. Now, what I want to get to is on March
23 the 10th and March the 11th.

24 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, sir.

25 MEMBER SHORT: Just allege -- I'm glad

1 nothing did happen bad -- but suppose someone had
2 got injured or hurt or even there was a death --
3 who would be responsible if you went to court in
4 the District of Columbia and the judge asks you
5 how did these people wind up dead?

6 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: To be honest, it
7 would be my fault, maybe, from not following
8 coordinates I guess.

9 MEMBER SHORT: What do you think the
10 judge would say to you after you that answer?

11 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I'm not sure.

12 MEMBER SHORT: Okay, not a problem.
13 I really think, if I can suggest anything to help
14 you, and that's what this board is here to do --
15 I think you need to get a copy of all the rules,
16 regulations, guidelines. I think you need to
17 probably go to our website, I think you need to
18 call our office and ask how you could operate
19 your rental business when it comes to the sales,
20 service and delivery of alcohol in the District
21 of Columbia. And I'm quite sure anyone you
22 talked to in our licensing division would be able
23 to give you a full information regarding how to
24 operate safely and properly in the District of
25 Columbia. We can't make you do anything; we can

1 only ask -- the only thing I'm going to ask you
2 is will you please give our office a call and
3 find out what you need to do before you get your
4 C of O and what you plan to do with your business
5 model. Can we agree that somebody would do that?

6 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, I will
7 appreciate the information.

8 MEMBER SHORT: Okay, thank you.
9 That's all I have, Mr. Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you. Any
11 other questions by any other board members?

12 MEMBER GRANDIS: Mr. Chairman?

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Good morning,
14 Mr. Grandis.

15 MEMBER GRANDIS: Sir, you may have
16 stated this, but when was the first time in D.C.
17 that you had an event like this? I think a
18 birthday party or retirement or some type of
19 event where alcohol was being served. When was
20 your first one?

21 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Are you stating
22 our first time being open?

23 MEMBER GRANDIS: You don't have a
24 license, so I don't know what you mean by being
25 open. I'm just asking, you said that during the

1 pandemic, like many people we all suffered
2 economically, and if I heard you right, that's
3 when you decided to do this kind of event. So
4 I'm asking when was your first one?

5 MEMBER GRANDIS: Okay, this was with
6 Rebel Taco before they shut down. So we were
7 more of a promoter at that time, so they were
8 fully licensed there on U Street, and I took my
9 model which is booking events, but I booked them
10 through other venues. So because I didn't have
11 my own, I would service these events at other
12 venues, as I do now. Some of the events that I
13 booked go through Ozio's, 1831 on M Street, and
14 D.C. Capital Bar & Grill -- these are all
15 partnerships that I've built in the last few
16 months. So I provide a service to them which is
17 also increasing business with them.

18 MEMBER GRANDIS: Once again, if I
19 understand what you're explaining, is that you've
20 been doing similar events since 2020, 2021?

21 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: 2021, yeah. 2021.

22 MEMBER GRANDIS: And you mentioned
23 some names of licensed establishments.

24 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Mm-hmm.

25 MEMBER GRANDIS: In any of these

1 situations did the licensee explain to you that
2 you needed to get a license of some sort from the
3 city or the ABC? Did any of them ever say
4 anything to you about asking your credentials?

5 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: At the time, no,
6 because I didn't have a venue. I didn't get my
7 venue until 2022. These were already established
8 venues, so all I did was create a website to book
9 events, make my booking fee and have a venue for
10 my clients to have to host these events, and
11 these are all licensed locations. So --

12 MEMBER GRANDIS: Okay, so now you --
13 you used the term "venue," so in your thinking,
14 this tax situation that we're talking about here
15 now based on this investigative report is because
16 it's at your venue?

17 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I'm sorry; could
18 you repeat the question?

19 MEMBER GRANDIS: You used the term
20 "venue."

21 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Mm-hmm.

22 MEMBER GRANDIS: So, was it in your --
23 so you now have a venue; is that what you're --
24 but when you did these two events, was it in your
25 thinking that that was your venue?

1 Because you used the term -- I'm just
2 trying to understand what your business model and
3 whether or not you follow any city's procedure on
4 getting the right type of licensing, insurance,
5 et cetera. So you used the term "venue," so in
6 your mind when you booked these two events, was
7 that your venue?

8 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Are you talking
9 about the events for the 10th and the 11th?

10 MEMBER GRANDIS: Yes. Yes, sir.

11 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, so my space
12 would be the rental space, correct.

13 MEMBER GRANDIS: So in your mind that
14 rental space was your venue?

15 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Correct.

16 MEMBER GRANDIS: And what is the name
17 of your company?

18 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: The Weekend Social
19 Club.

20 MEMBER GRANDIS: And is that
21 registered with the city at all?

22 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes.

23 MEMBER GRANDIS: And where is it
24 registered?

25 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: It's -- I have a

1 copy if you want me to fill out the copy.

2 MEMBER GRANDIS: No, sir. I'm just
3 asking you which agency did you register with?

4 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Under D.C. So I
5 filed my regular LLC and I got a basic business
6 license, and also two trade names under whichever
7 website that we're able to do so. I mean, that's
8 how I could get my C of O's.

9 MEMBER GRANDIS: But if I follow the
10 tax situation, you don't have a C of O.

11 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I do have two C of
12 O's.

13 MEMBER GRANDIS: For this particular
14 location?

15 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, they might be
16 under Five Lounge, which was the whole trade
17 name, but I bought the Weekend Social Club trade
18 name and added to, you know, the business in
19 order to change the name of it.

20 MEMBER GRANDIS: So, you actually have
21 a C of O in the name of the Weekend Social Club?

22 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: No, that's my
23 trade name. It's Haru Group, LLC. I'm sorry.

24 MEMBER GRANDIS: Okay, so you have a
25 C of O and that C of O is for the location where

1 these two events were?

2 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Correct.

3 MEMBER GRANDIS: And were you
4 purchasing the alcohol from a wholesaler or the
5 alcohol for the first night? Just help me
6 understand, who did you get that alcohol from?

7 I think you stated it; I just wanted
8 to make sure I got it.

9 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: It's Steve Louis.
10 J. Matsikis representative.

11 MEMBER GRANDIS: Who are they?

12
13 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: At the time I
14 thought they were a licensed caterer in D.C., but
15 their license is in Virginia.

16 MEMBER GRANDIS: Did you have
17 insurance for this space that you say you have a
18 C of O for? Did you have business insurance,
19 liability insurance?

20 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes.

21 MEMBER GRANDIS: You do?

22 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, with Liberty.

23 MEMBER GRANDIS: Chairman, I think
24 that's all. I'm just trying to make sure I
25 understand what was the thinking of this

1 individual.

2 Thank you for your answers, sir.

3 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: My pleasure.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, Mr.
5 Gebreyohannes. I want to get some clarification
6 because I think a lot of us are confused. So,
7 you have this business called the Weekend Social
8 Club; is that correct, sir?

9 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: That is correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And can you,
11 please, once again explain to us what is your
12 business model?

13 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: The business model
14 is the rent, the ability to rent the space for
15 the event, a venue. A host is able to go on my
16 website, choose either my venue or venues that I
17 partnered with and check for availability on the
18 dates that they're looking for to host either a
19 private birthday party, corporate affair, Sweet
20 16, whatever the case may be, along upgrades of
21 having decor, and then at their event at the date
22 that's chosen, you know, process a fee for the
23 booking.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, so
25 what is it that you provide? So I come to your -

1 - I go on your website and I rent your space for
2 a birthday party -- what is it that you provide
3 me?

4 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: So, I provide the
5 space, an on-site manager and security. And then
6 I require them to either have a caterer or, you
7 know, hire one through us at the time, which
8 would either be the Louis that I have or they
9 would provide their own. So, I've adjusted my
10 model since to where it's now through Grub
11 Rockstar Catering Company whose licensed, because
12 I don't want to take the risk anymore, and follow
13 coordinates of all events from here on out. If
14 they're at my location, then that has to be
15 catered for food and beverages. If it's any
16 other venue, these other venues are fully
17 licensed such as Ozio's, 1831 and D.C. Capitol
18 Bar & Grill on East Capitol Street. They will
19 then take care of the host with the other
20 services that they offer. But aside from that I
21 would just keep my booking fee for sending them
22 the business.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, so
24 you create the space and if they want to serve
25 food and alcohol, then they either have to go to

1 your preferred caterer or they have to get their
2 own caterer to cater the event; is that correct?

3 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: That's correct.
4 We're similar to like a banquet hall; we just
5 have a bar and lounge setting. So a banquet hall
6 is another space that we just rent that would be
7 available for rent, a caterer would be available.
8 I'm not sure if they're allowed to bring their
9 own food and alcohol, but from back-in-the-day
10 cases, that's how it used to be. But I just
11 provide scenery that my clients prefer which is
12 a bar and lounge setting.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And so you
14 provide a manager and you provide security; is
15 that correct?

16 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: What is it that
18 a manager does?

19 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: He just runs the
20 operations, make sure my clients are catered to.
21 You know, A/C, if they need tables, utensils,
22 just all of the above, anything that my clients
23 need they will tend to.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

25 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yeah, that's

1 solely from my location. At other venues the
2 other venues would be responsible as far as staff
3 and customer service.

4 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Just -- I guess
5 the way you have explained before is that you
6 have been acting as a promoter for other venues,
7 and other venues that they have you provide the
8 clientele or you provide the -- I'm sorry; you
9 provide the clientele and either/fro, but now you
10 decided that you want to be the venue. So that's
11 now your business model; it's like you now want
12 to operate your own venue.

13 So, are you thinking about applying
14 for a license for this establishment?

15 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes, Chairman.
16 After doing some research, after being stopped on
17 the attempt on the 11th, I ceased all operations
18 regarding alcohol. That way I can move forward
19 and attempt to get a license of my own, and also
20 update the CO's within my property.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, one of the
22 -- okay, so you said that you have a landlord, so
23 you're renting the space; is that correct?

24 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: That is correct.

25 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: So, what is it

1 that -- what type of establishment is it that
2 your landlord believes that you are operating?

3 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: He knows I'm
4 running an events space business.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Any
6 questions by any of the investigators, any of the
7 board members want to ask before I try to wrap
8 this hearing up?

9 MEMBER GRANDIS: Mr. Chairman, I know
10 I've asked a bunch of questions.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, Mr.
12 Grandis.

13 MEMBER GRANDIS: Now with this
14 dialogue -- thank you. Sir, when you went to
15 this particular space about these two, what the
16 investigation report is about, you met with the
17 owner of the building or a tenant that is leasing
18 the space that you are now using?

19 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I'm sorry; could
20 you repeat the question?

21 MEMBER GRANDIS: When you located this
22 particular space as the subject of these two
23 nights' investigation, had you gotten a lease
24 from either the landlord who owns the whole
25 building or that portion of the building or a

1 tenant that was renting the building or a portion
2 of that building that you used?

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON:

4 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I'm not sure if I
5 fully understand your question. But if have -- I
6 do have a lease here if that's what you're
7 asking.

8 MEMBER GRANDIS: Mm-hmm.

9 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: From Sahid or
10 Atolla Al Mahmidian.

11 MEMBER GRANDIS: I'm not stating
12 myself well enough for you to understand the
13 question. I'm not concerned about the person's
14 name at this point, but did that person represent
15 themselves as the owner -- owner, okay -- the
16 owner of that building or the premises of the
17 area that you're using? Or did that person
18 represent themselves as a tenant who has a lease
19 from the owner for that building or that portion
20 of the building? Because I'm utterly not
21 following what the chain of ownership is. So who
22 did -- the person who gave you permission, was
23 that person the owner of record of the building
24 or the space that you're using, or the tenant?

25 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: No, that person

1 was the owner of the building who gave me the
2 lease.

3 MEMBER GRANDIS: Okay, so owner of the
4 building.

5 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Right.

6 MEMBER GRANDIS: And did the owner of
7 the building in that lease give you permission to
8 sell alcoholic beverages; is that in the lease
9 that you have?

10 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes.

11 MEMBER GRANDIS: If you're not clear,
12 that's fine.

13 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I would have to
14 double check, but to my knowledge, yes he knows
15 I'm currently running an events space business
16 which also may consume alcoholic beverages.

17 MEMBER GRANDIS: Well, he may know
18 that, but it may not be in the lease, okay.

19 So let's move on from there.

20 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Mm-hmm.

21 MEMBER GRANDIS: If that is the case
22 that the person and you have permission to be in
23 that space, knows you're going to be selling
24 alcoholic beverages, did they ask you for a copy
25 of your ABC license or one-day license, or

1 anything from the ABC agency?

2 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: No, I was not
3 asked.

4 MEMBER GRANDIS: And it was in your
5 mind until this hearing that you could just go
6 find a space in D.C. regardless of how it's
7 licensed or permitted, or C of O that you simply
8 could go there and have a party that sells
9 alcoholic beverages?

10 I'm not challenging you; I'm just
11 trying to get your thinking that you could just
12 go anywhere in the city and just have a special
13 event for a birthday or whatever without city
14 knowledge and approvals?

15 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Not exactly. So,
16 when I first wanted to have my own space, I knew
17 that we did have to get C of O's and for me that
18 was just being able to say that I operate the
19 space not knowing in full detail, you know,
20 occupancy load, et cetera. But no, I wasn't just
21 getting a space in order to just, you know, have
22 alcohol to serve and consume; I knew that I at
23 least needed a caterer if I didn't have an ABC
24 Class C license or a temporary license. This
25 entire time I told you I was under the assumption

1 that the current caterer that I was working with
2 was licensed and registered in D.C. After
3 finding that afterwards, unknown --

4 MEMBER GRANDIS: Assumptions can be
5 dangerous. So you didn't even inquire if the
6 caterer was licensed in D.C.?

7 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Well, no. He
8 presented me this sheet that I showed to the
9 first agent, and that's when he acknowledged that
10 this isn't a D.C. caterer's license.

11 MEMBER GRANDIS: Right. So, you say
12 you have two C of O's, if I heard you correctly?

13 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yeah, one for
14 upstairs, one for downstairs. I was required to
15 do so.

16 MEMBER GRANDIS: And the one for
17 downstairs, what is the occupancy on that C of O?

18 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: From my memory it
19 says 12.

20 MEMBER GRANDIS: And were there 12 or
21 less people in that space when our investigators
22 were there?

23 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: It was more than
24 12.

25 MEMBER GRANDIS: The 2nd Floor, you

1 say you have a C of O, sir.

2 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Correct.

3 MEMBER GRANDIS: What is the C of O
4 for; is it for a restaurant, is this for office
5 space, what does it say on that C of O?

6 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: It just says
7 office space.

8 MEMBER GRANDIS: And did you have
9 people that were part of the event on the 1st
10 Floor accessing the 2nd Floor on those two
11 evenings?

12 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Not on both
13 evenings. Just on the second, that's it.

14 MEMBER GRANDIS: So on one of the
15 evenings you knowingly had a C of O that clearly
16 said office, but you allowed individuals to go on
17 the 2nd Floor?

18 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Yes. To be
19 honest, a C of O stating that if it's office
20 space, if I'm unable to rent my space for event
21 use whether it's an office or a bar or, you know,
22 a kitchen space, I assumed at the time the space
23 is a space.

24 MEMBER GRANDIS: Okay. Sir,
25 assumptions can be dangerous.

1 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Mm-hmm.

2 MEMBER GRANDIS: Imagine if there was
3 an emergency in that building -- up till now even
4 -- the expectations of people who are there is
5 that you have the right license so that they know
6 that they're safe in that space.

7 So, I want to thank you. I'm just
8 thinking that there's some education that you
9 need to put yourself through to be a responsible
10 business person offering alcohol in the city.

11 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: I understand.

12 MEMBER GRANDIS: Chairman, thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right, I'm
14 going to bring this hearing to an end. The board
15 will make a determination, the board will take
16 this matter under advisement and whether we're
17 going to lift the cease-and-desist. But one
18 thing, the only thing I will leave with you
19 today, sir you are -- you have a commercial space
20 and if you are going to allow, in order for
21 alcohol to be served, even alcohol that has been
22 given away, in a commercial space, a license is
23 required, and a license can be obtained either by
24 you applying for a license from the agency, a
25 permit license, a one-day license, a temporary

1 one-day license, or you utilize a caterer and
2 both -- if a one-day license is being utilized,
3 the licensed owner or ABC manager has to be
4 there for the entire period, or if there is a
5 caterer that if -- if there's a catered event,
6 the caterer provides food, alcohol that's
7 incident to the food, and either the caterer or
8 ABC manager has to be at the event the entire
9 time, okay? So that's where we are. But the
10 board will make, will take this matter under
11 advisement and we will let you know as soon as
12 possible whether or not we are going to lift the
13 cease-and-desist or whether or not it will remain
14 in place until further action, okay?

15 Do you have any other questions, sir?

16 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: No, I'd just like
17 to say it is -- I mean, I take full
18 responsibility, obviously, for my failure of not
19 fully understanding compliance and I'd just like
20 to request some leniency in giving me a second
21 chance in order to be compliant and run this
22 operational group.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.
24 Thank you very much, sir. Have a great day.

25 MR. GEBREYOHANNES: Thank you,

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Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Bye bye.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
went off the record at 12:03 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: The Weekend Social Club

Before: DC ABRA

Date: 04-26-23

Place: teleconference

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



Court Reporter

NEAL R. GROSS

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