

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE AND CANNABIS BOARD
+ + + + +
MEETING

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IN THE MATTER OF:
:
:
Kezira, Inc.,
:
t/a Kezira Lounge
:
3013 Georgia Ave NW
: Show Cause
Retailer CR - ANC 1E
: Hearing (Status)
License No. 117490
:
Case #23-CMP-00007
:
:
(Operating After Hours,
:
Interfered with an ABCA
:
Investigation, Provided
:
False or Misleading
:
Information)
:
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Wednesday
December 13, 2023

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

PRESENT:

DONOVAN W. ANDERSON, Chairperson
SILAS GRANT, JR., Member
JAMES SHORT, JR., Member

ALSO PRESENT:

JOSE ORELLANA, DC ABCA Staff
MEKEDES YEHUALASHET, Applicant
MESKEREM BALKEW, Amharic Interpreter
CHRIS SOUTHCOTT, DC OAG

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

2 11:21 a.m.

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. The
4 next case in our calendar is Case No. 23-CMP-
5 00007, Kezira Lounge, K-E-Z-I-R-A, Lounge,
6 License No. 117490. Mr. Orellana, can you please
7 elevate the rights of the licensee? And there is
8 also an interpreter in this case, please.

9 MR. ORELLANA: Sure. Mekedes
10 Yehualashet, your access has been elevated. And
11 Meskerem Balkew, your access has been elevated.
12 That is all, Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you.
14 Hold on. Let me see. Hold on. All right. Can
15 I have everyone turn their cameras on, please.

16 MS. BALKEW: They're on.

17 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, ma'am. I
18 need you to -- I desperately need you to turn
19 your camera on, ma'am.

20 MS. BALKEW: Yeah, I am trying, sir.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

22 MS. BALKEW: My camera is on.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I cannot see
24 you, ma'am. So if you need -- and you're the
25 interpreter, and I need to see you. All right.

1 MS. BALKEW: Yes, sir. I am trying.
2 The option, what can I perform my end?

3 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Mr. Orellana,
4 is there any assistance you can give the
5 interpreter, please?

6 MR. ORELLANA: There may be a privacy
7 cover or a lid slider. I would check that to
8 see.

9 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Ma'am, it
10 appears that you have some type of privacy on
11 your screen, because the type of screen I'm
12 looking at, it appears that it's blocking your
13 view. So maybe you need to move that from your
14 camera.

15 MS. BALKEW: Okay

16 (Simultaneous speaking.)

17 MS. BALKEW: Can I log in again?

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Yes, ma'am.

19 Why don't you log back in again, ma'am.

20 MS. BALKEW: Okay, okay, sir.

21 (Pause.)

22 MS. BALKEW: Back, sir.

23 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Hold on one
24 minute, please. Hold on. Hold on. I still
25 can't see you.

1 MS. BALKEW: My camera is on.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. You
3 know what? All right. Can you raise your right
4 hand? Ma'am, if you are going to be an
5 interpreter for these cases, you have to figure
6 out what's going on with your camera because I
7 need to see you because you're working as an
8 interpreter. All right. So whatever it is --

9 MS. BALKEW: I never had any problem
10 with my camera before.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Are you using
12 a phone? Are you using a computer? What are you
13 using, ma'am?

14 MS. BALKEW: I'm using a computer.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. But
16 if I'm going to use you as an interpreter in any
17 case, ma'am, you need to figure out because
18 what's basically going on, I'm not seeing a black
19 screen. It appears that there is something that
20 is preventing your camera from operating. So
21 there's some blockage, some shield or something,
22 because I'm not seeing a blank screen.

23 I'm seeing, like, there is some type
24 of shield that's preventing us from seeing you.
25 So I need you to figure that out why I cannot see

1 you. But anyway, what I want you to do, ma'am, I
2 need you to raise your hand. Let me know when
3 you're -- hello?

4 MS. BALKEW: I did.

5 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I need you to
6 raise your right hand. Let me know when your
7 hand is risen, ma'am.

8 MS. BALKEW: Yeah, I did raise my
9 right hand.

10 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Do you solemnly
11 affirm that you will faithfully and accurately
12 interpret the proceedings in this matter from
13 English to Amharic and from Amharic into English
14 to the best of your ability?

15 MS. BALKEW: I do.

16 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Can you please
17 spell and state your name for the record?

18 MS. BALKEW: My first name, M-E-S-K-E-
19 R-E-M, Meskerem. Last name, B-A-L-K-E-W.

20 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: And you are an
21 interpreter in Amharic. Is that correct?

22 MS. BALKEW: Yes, I am an Amharic
23 interpreter.

24 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. Can
25 you ask Ms. Yehualashet -- and again, ask the

1 licensee to turn her camera on. And I need her
2 to spell and state her name for the record. Mr.
3 Orellana, what is going on with the licensee?

4 I can't see the licensee. I can't see
5 the interpreter. What's going on with the
6 licensee? I know that the licensee has a camera
7 because we had a hearing with this licensee last
8 week and everything worked. So what's going on
9 this week?

10 MR. ORELLANA: Just sent the licensee
11 a request to unmute. And the licensee is on a
12 mobile device.

13 MS. YEHUALASHET: My camera is broken.
14 My name is Mekedes Yehualashet.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Can you ask her
16 to spell her name, please?

17 MS. YEHUALASHET: M-E-K-E-D-E-S,
18 Mekedes. Last name, Y-E-H-U-A-L-A-S-H-E-T.

19 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I'm sorry, Mr.
20 Southcott. I didn't even ask you to identify
21 yourself for the record. Go ahead, sir.

22 MR. SOUTHCOTT: Good morning. My name
23 is Chris Southcott. First name, C-H-R-I-S. Last
24 name, S-O-U-T-H-C-O-T-T. I'm from D.C.'s Office
25 of the Attorney General representing the

1 government.

2 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Good morning,
3 sir. All right. Ms. Balkew, I need you to
4 interpret what was just said. Everything that
5 goes on, I need you to interpret for the
6 licensee, ma'am. Mr. Southcott, are there any
7 preliminary matters in this case?

8 MR. SOUTHCOTT: There are no
9 preliminary matters from the District. I would
10 note that the District has -- this is the first
11 opportunity that the District has had to actually
12 speak with the owner, and there was an attempt to
13 communicate an Offer in Compromise to the extent
14 that the owner is interested in discussing that.
15 I would appreciate some contact on my end just so
16 that I can hear the owner's thoughts with respect
17 to the offer that's been presented.

18 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Is this your
19 case, Mr. Southcott?

20 MR. SOUTHCOTT: It is.

21 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Are you able to
22 communicate with the licensee, Mr. Southcott?

23 MR. SOUTHCOTT: I sent an email to the
24 email address that was listed on the file
25 communicating the Offer in Compromise. I'm not

1 sure if the Board wants me to read the terms of
2 the OIC that's been offered. I assume not, but I
3 would just ask that the owner contact me to
4 discuss the terms of the Offer in Compromise.

5 MS. YEHUALASHET: Okay.

6 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

7 Does the owner -- does the licensee have any
8 questions?

9 MS. YEHUALASHET: No, I don't have any
10 questions.

11 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right.

12 Then this matter is scheduled for a show cause
13 hearing on January 24th at 1:30 p.m.

14 MS. YEHUALASHET: Okay. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I just want to
16 remind the parties that seven days before the
17 hearing, you are required to disclose documents
18 and witnesses that you will rely upon at the
19 hearing.

20 MS. YEHUALASHET: Will Mr. Southcott
21 will send me an email so I can send you the
22 documents and the witnesses?

23 MR. SOUTHCOTT: I am happy to send an
24 email to communicate witnesses and exhibits
25 through email. I just want to make sure that I

1 have the correct email address for Ms.
2 Yehualashet so she can just confirm her email
3 address. That would be great.

4 MS. YEHUALASHET:
5 Fasildawit101@gmail.com and amybelete@yahoo.com.
6 She has two email addresses.

7 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: I need you to
8 spell them for the record because -- yeah.

9 MS. YEHUALASHET: F-A-S-I-L-D-A-W-I-T-
10 1-0-1 @gmail.com. The other one, A-M-Y-B-E-L-E-
11 T-E @yahoo.com.

12 MR. SOUTHCOTT: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: All right. If
14 there's no further matter, I'll see you then on
15 January 24th at 1:30 p.m. I just want to remind
16 the parties if this matter goes to a hearing, I
17 need all cameras to be on. I'm not going to do
18 this hearing if your camera is not working. Make
19 sure that your camera is on so I will see you at
20 the hearing.

21 MS. YEHUALASHET: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you very
23 much. Have a great day.

24 MS. BALKEW: I apologize for the
25 inconvenience. Have a good day.

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CHAIRPERSON ANDERSON: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
went off the record at 11:38 a.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: Kezira Lounge

Before: DC ABCA

Date: 12-13-23

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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