

(The following is not a verbatim transcript of comments or discussion that occurred during the meeting, but rather a summarization intended for general informational purposes. All motions and votes are the official records).

SAFETY SERVICES & LICENSES COMMITTEE

A special meeting of the Safety Services and Licenses Committee was held on Thursday, May 27, 2021 via Zoom webinar.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 P.M. by the Chair.

Present: Councilman Robert J. Ferri
Councilwoman Lammis J. Vargas
Councilwoman Aniece Germain
Council Vice-President Edward J. Brady
Councilman Matthew R. Reilly, Vice-Chair
Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli, Chair
Council President Christopher G. Paplauskas

Also Present: Councilman John P. Donegan
Councilwoman Jessica M. Marino
Anthony Moretti, Director of Administration
Christopher Millea, City Solicitor
Stephen Angell, City Council Legal Counsel
Chief James Warren, Fire Department
Major Todd Patalano, Police Department
Franklin Paulino, Director of Economic Development
David Dimaio, City Council Budget Analyst
Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees
Heather Finger, Stenographer

A. PUBLIC HEARINGS

B. NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

BOXING LICENSE - June 19, 2021 1-*9 pm

Classic Entertainment & Sports, Inc.

d/b/a CES Boxing

Jimmy Birchfield, Jr.

Cranston Stadium

19 HOUR ALCOHOLIC LICENSE (Full) - June 19, 2021

EZ Bar, LLC

Stephen Hallas

Cranston Stadium

Jimmy Birchfield, Jr. appeared to speak and stated that they are seeking to stage an event to showcase some of the exciting pro and amateur boxing in this region, such as Cranston's own Garry Balletto, Jr., Aiden Balletto and a young amateur by the name of Tyler Macari. The pro fights will start at noontime and will go live throughout the world on UFC fight pass at 1 pm. They will be showcasing and are excited to showcase Cranston Stadium as well as other places of interest in Cranston throughout the broadcast. The pro side of the card will be completed at approximately 4 pm and then there will be a two-hour intermission, which will give an opportunity for the fans to leave, cleanup the area and there will be an amateur card starting at 7 pm and forecast that to end around 9 pm. There will be separate ticketing for each event for the pro card during the day and the amateur card at night. Regarding some safety concerns, along with the Police Department, they have put together a safety plan. They will have their own security as well as ushers and EMT on site. They will be providing a certificate of insurance for general liability in the amount of \$1 million to \$3 million and the City will be an additional insurer on that. The intent is to make it about Cranston. They will also be honoring someone who is dear to everyone, Sergeant Adam Pacheco, who used to be a supporter of CES and at some point, during the event, they will be honoring him and his family. Unfortunately, he recently passed away. They are also hoping to showcase some talents and music talent from the City of Cranston. They have applied for the boxing permit and also applied for the State license with DBR. It is his understanding that a permit on behalf of EZBar has been applied for for this particular event and they hope to offer beer and wine. As far as the food, they are in discussion with some Cranston food trucks, which they will be inside the Stadium. As to the concerns of parking, they have secured some additional parking within the facility, from the YMCA and other local businesses from that area and hope to secure some parking from Bain School. As to the setup, the ring will be placed on mid-point of the field. On the field, there will be limited amount of seating for what they call VIP seating. Underneath the VIP seating, there will be some type of flooring to protect the astro turf. They expect or anticipate approximately 1000 people for the pro event and approximately 600-700 people for the amateur card night.

Stephen Hallas, 342 Auburn St. and Cranston School Teacher, appeared to speak regarding the Class F liquor license and stated that this event is a great opportunity for Cranston. He plans to set up wherever he can and safely sell beer and wine for this event.

Public Speakers:

Tara Quinn, 163 Jordan Ave., appeared to speak and stated that she is all for something like this going forth in the City of Cranston. She would just prefer, as a resident in this neighborhood, to keep the Stadium for the community and what we have used it for historically. There are other options in the City. She is very concerned about the amount of people that this will attract, very concerned about the two-hour lag time, very concerned of what was presented from the 1 pm to 4 pm is now going past 9 pm. This is a good community of working people densely populated area, there is not a lot of parking at the YMCA or at Bain or other businesses that would accommodate 1000 plus people. The streets are too narrow. The City just invested in new turf for the field. She would love to have this in Cranston, but she does not want it in her neighborhood.

Joe Liberatore, 118 Chandler Ave., appeared to speak and stated that he has lived in this neighborhood for 28 years. This neighborhood has dealt with Battle of Bands, East/West Thanksgiving Day games and Hendricken/LaSalle games and those have been very populated. Adding alcohol to this event is just not a good idea.

Henry Palazzo, 467 Natick Ave., appeared to speak in favor of this event and stated that this would be a great opportunity for Cranston and also a great opportunity to highlight some local athletes.

Gary Balletto appeared to speak and stated that he grew up in Cranston and he knows the Stadium very well. It is a place for sporting events and he thinks this event is just as good as any sporting event and he understands that there is a parking situation where there is not enough parking. He spoke to Steve O'Donnell, Director of YMCA, and he has given permission to use this lot since the UMCA closes at noon on Saturday and it is in walking distance. Whatever he can do to help, he is available to help put this show together.

Frank Mastrati, Jr., 132 Chandler Ave., appeared to speak and stated that he is concerned with the liquor license. There has never been an event like this at this location in the last thirty years. There has been Battle of the Bands and they have had high school football, super bowl and there was also an event with Michael Bolton who came and spoke and sang and that was very well-controlled too. If the liquor was dropped, he would be more amenable. The concern he has is on a number of levels, such as the parking. A concern with the liquor, boxing attracts a different group than high school football. If you start giving liquor license way in public facilities, you could be setting a precedent for other people to come in to use the facility. He is not stating that he is opposed to this event, but he has a lot of concerns about the regulations.

Michael Macari, 15 Abby Lane, Hope, RI, appeared to speak and stated that he owns a few businesses in the community and grew up in the community. This event is a great opportunity for the kids to showcase their skills, especially if we can bring some revenue into the City.

Paul Griffith, 140 Bayview Ave., appeared to speak and stated that he was former President of the Edgewood Eagles Football in the early 1990's and he used to have a carnival, Rockwell Amusements and he used to get a permit for beer and wine for Park View field and used to run for five days and did that for three years in a row. Also, Anthony Palmisano, who runs St. Mary's Feast, which runs for five days, had the San Gennaro Feast at the Stadium with a big stage, entertainment and beer and wine and it is nothing new and everything was fine. This would be a great venue for the City.

Council Vice-President Brady thanked the Birchfield family for considering our beautiful City as a scouted location. He thinks this opportunity is great for the City of Cranston to have millions and millions of views internationally is truly something to be excited about. He has received hundreds of messages from constituents excited and ready to buy tickets for this event. It is also great to hear that the company is taking the concerns seriously working with the security company that he himself has experienced with in the past. We have liquor and wine from a coach that when he was a senior in high school was a teacher and is passionate about food trucks from Cranston. This is not something new. As we all know, the 2018 80's concert has happened at the Stadium with close to the same amount of people in attendance where a liquor license was granted for a charity event and it is his understanding that CES is also willing to donate. He knows Mr. Hallas's experience personally being in the restaurant industry. He also knows that Mr. Hallas has done events small and large and his employees would be TIPS certified.

Mr. Hallas stated that he will be overseeing everything to make sure everything is being done in a safe well-behaved manner. In regards to the lag time, he does not plan on serving at all between the two events.

Council Vice-President Brady asked if the Police has reviewed the security plan. Major Patalano stated that it was reviewed today and the Police Department does not see any problems based on the plan that was presented.

Councilman Donegan thanked Mr. Birchfield and agrees that it is great that Cranston is being considered for something like this. The Assistant City Clerk had forwarded him a copy of the application. He asked if any other paperwork has been submitted with that for either the liquor license or the event license. Solicitor stated that there was a permit and a fee submitted by Mr. Birchfield on behalf of CES. They also have assured the City that they have supplied the same to DBR. As far as Mr. Hallas, there has been an application that is before this Committee at this time and he has also submitted the fee and a copy of his insurance, copy of his Driver's License so a background check can be done and he submitted his TIPS certification, which is required.

Councilman Donegan asked if a safety plan has been submitted to the committee for review or has anyone on the Committee seen a copy of the safety plan. He pointed out that per Chapter 5.2 of the City Code alcohol beverage license, a site plan has to be submitted with the application and it is to be reviewed by the Traffic Engineer, Zoning Office and Fire. Solicitor stated that that is being done by the specific departments within the City.

Director Moretti stated that a site plan was submitted as part of the routing that was sent to the Police, Fire, Inspections and Traffic.

Councilman Donegan asked Mr. Birchfield what time the stage and equipment and everything else will start to be set up. Mr. Birchfield stated that, weather permitting, probably about 9 am. There may be some activity the day before. He clarified the issue of the start time. The broadcast goes live at 1 pm. Councilman Donegan stated that from what he has been told, for similar scale events, approximately \$5,000 fee or rental fee was applied. He asked what the City is charging other than the required licensing fee. Director Moretti stated that he is not aware of the \$5,000 fee that is typically charged. The Mayor will waive the fee for this event. He sees this as a first and foremost in terms of public to be concerned about is safety and security of this event for the neighbors, the attendees, the participants and the public safety officials that are there. The support for this was with the consultation of Police and Fire and being comfortable with this event, so it was under the pretense of public safety that he supports it and with the anticipated attendees, it seems like it is well short of capacity in some of the other large events that have taken place at the Stadium so he feels comfortable with that. As waiting those fees and actually he wishes to waive four hours of Police and Fire details for this event. The reason for it is he feels that this is going to be an opportunity to sell Cranston post COVID in order to put Cranston in both local and international spotlight.

Councilman Donegan asked if the City is going to get any sort of percentage of ticket sales or any flat rate from tickets. Mr. Birchfield stated that they have had discussion about making a donation to some charitable organization. Councilman Donegan asked how much the four hours of detail will be to the City. Director Moretti stated that the estimated amount is approximately \$2,400 for Police and Fire. Councilman Donegan asked how is responsible for cleaning up both Cranston Stadium and potential trash debris that will get into the neighborhood afterwards. Director Moretti stated that that could be done by Parks and Recreation or Highway.

Councilman Donegan stated that the entire area is not Zoned Commercial, it is not Zoned Industrial, it is Residential. It is all Residential including the Stadium. He does not see who would allow an event with full liquor, as application states, in a Residential area. He does not think liquor should be considered for this area. As presented, in addition to the fact that the Committee has not seen the site plan, the Committee has not seen the safety plan, we are putting the cart before the horse on voting on something without all that information. He also implored the Committee to potentially, if able, to require that alcohol is not served and if license passes, not allow alcohol to be consumed before the event starts, which would be noon.

Council President Paplauskas motioned to approve the boxing license application. Council Vice-President Brady seconded the motion.

Under Discussion:

Council President Paplauskas pointed out that the Cranston Stadium has had liquor in the past and there have not been any issues. The 80's concert that was recently done had a full liquor license and this is only going to be beer and wine. There is a little bit of a history of large events with no issues. Major Patalano has reviewed the security plan. He sees no reason to doubt the security plan being vetted by the Police Department. This is nationally televised event. This is something that we couldn't buy TV time to promote our City and are using a lot of Cranston people.

Councilman Ferri stated that he agrees that this is a great opportunity for the City of Cranston and he appreciates the hard work everyone has put into this and putting this together. He asked, who in the City of Cranston, is the point person that is going to make sure that everything that is planned from A-Z is carried out. Director Moretti stated that he would be happy to, but certainly, he would be deferring to the experts. Councilman Ferri questioned how the Administration can expect the City Council to vote on something when there is no plan and point of plan for the event. He wants this to happen and wants it to be successful. He wants the City to get the exposure, but the City Council does not have all the information. The fact that we are going to be giving the event away and giving the Stadium away and we are not going to be guaranteed any income and it is going to cost the City money, he just does not understand how the Administration can expect someone, an elected Official listening to their constituents, to vote on something that they do not have a plan for and in fact is going to cost the City money. He does not understand why we just do not charge the event planner a fee and they give us all the paperwork in the plan and they take the liability and we just take the publicity and wash our hands of it and we have no risk. We do not have to pay for Police or Fire. He does not understand why we have to take risk, not get paid and not have a plan and you want the City Council to vote on something we do not have a plan for. It makes no sense to him at all.

Councilman Reilly stated that he is really excited for this. The world is starting to come out from the pandemic and out from its hibernation. This is exciting, it is out of the box, it is one afternoon and evening. It is a fun event and it is something to be good for the City and fun.

Chair asked if anyone has been charged \$5,000 to use that facility and also asked where the \$5,000 came from. Director Moretti stated that he honestly can't answer that question, but if you do the math, that is a lot of hours for \$5,000.

Councilwoman Germain stated that this event is a good thing for the city even though she has some other concerns. One of her concerns is when she first heard about this event, she thought it would bring in some money to the City and she believes that we should not set this precedent of not charging a fee. She proposes not totally waiving the fee. As to the liquor license, she would like to hear about past events that have had liquor license at this location. We need to have the history of past events and we need to see the security plan.

Franklin Paulino, Director of Economic Development, appeared to speak and stated that he believes that this is a wonderful opportunity for the City to showcase what it has to offer. This comes at a unique time celebrating the bright future of post COVID of Cranston with national TV marketing of the City and welcoming of our City visitors. This program will present direct economic opportunity associated with the event, including sales tax revenues from food and beverage at the event in sales revenues from nearby businesses.

Director Moretti stated that Mr. Birchfield approached the City with the idea for the professional boxing and he's illustrated about the afternoon event. The city had concerns about the evening event and he thinks Mr. Birchfield can better explain what that event is in the evening portion. The concern of Councilwoman Germain of setting precedent, yes, it is setting precedent, but the Mayor sees this as a one off event due to the timing of this event during post COVID to try to get the community going, feel better about themselves and actually put a little shot in the arm back for this event's economic development.

Councilwoman Vargas asked Major Patalano how many Officers will be at this event. Major Patalano stated that there will be ten Officers at the facility, eight inside and two outside and they will be supported by several bike patrol Officers and also Officers working regular patrol that day, so they will have a full compliment that they feel is appropriate and sufficient to handle any problems that should occur. The Promoter will have their own security of eight people from NES Security.

Councilwoman Vargas asked Mr. Birchfield to expand on the two events and the times. Mr. Birchfield stated that in the first portion of the event, the doors will open at 11:30, the fights start at noon, and they go live on TV at approximately one and they expect that portion of the event to be done by four. Then there will be an approximate one and a half to two-hour intermission to clean up and get the fans for the first portion of the event away and then doors will be open at approximately 6:30 and start the amateur show at 7 and they forecast to be done by 9. He indicated that a lot of the fans come for one particular fighter or perhaps two fighters. Very rarely the fans stay for the entire event, so it is not necessarily like a football game. Councilwoman Vargas asked Mr. Birchfield how long he noticed that this was going to be taking place in our city prior to having a special Safety Services meeting. Mr. Birchfield stated that with the COVID restrictions constantly being changed, this has been a moving target. There have been some discussions of other locations, Cranston was one of the locations they started discussing.

Solicitor stated that as far as the alcohol, it is his understanding that Mr. Hallas is seeking an F-1, which is for beer and wine only. The application may have to be amended by Mr. Hallas since he may have checked the wrong box. Mr. Hallas stated that that is correct. He is just looking to serve beer and wine and not full alcohol.

Discussion took place on the waiving of the fee. Mr. Birchfield stated that they would be willing to make a donation of \$500 to the City if that would provide some comfort.

Councilwoman Vargas stated that she does not feel comfortable voting yes on this right now without having the entire parking situation and policies and procedures in place.

Chairwoman Renzulli stated that as to the site plan, as far as parking, she questioned if that is something we ask for and Traffic signs off on. As to the traffic signs and closing down of the roads, she thought that was under the Police. She does not know that there was another plan that they were supposed to be submitting.

Major Patalano stated that whenever there is an application for any event that there is a public safety concern and the number of patrons, it is reviewed by the Police Department, Fire Department and all different departments throughout the City and they are signed off on. In this case, it was presented to the Police Department, it was an event at the Stadium which they are figuring on an estimate. They only handle the security concerns. As far as the parking, when that event gets closer, the Police Department will speak with the City Officials and the event planner and find out how many people they are expecting and there may be sports restricted on the streets.

Chairwoman Renzulli stated that as to the notice to the neighbors, as far as she knows, this Committee can approve a Class F license with notice to neighbors is exempt. Solicitor stated that that is correct, no notice is required.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Council Vice-President Brady, it was voted to move the question. Motion passed unanimously.

Councilwoman Vargas motioned to go into Executive Session. Steven Paiva, hosting the Zoom meeting, stated that we are currently set up as a Webinar for this meeting and not set up as a regular meeting and he does not have the ability to exclude people, the way this meeting is set up it is set up publicly, so from a technology capability, we do not have the ability to go into Executive Session at this time. Attorney Angell stated that other than the technology issue, there is a motion that has been made and a second that passed unanimously to move the question. The question that is now before the Council and on the floor is a motion to approve the license, which has been seconded. That is the motion that is before the Committee.

Chair asked for roll call vote on motion to approve the boxing license.

Roll call was taken on motion to approve the boxing license application and motion passed on a vote of 5-2. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Germain, Council Vice-President Brady, Councilman Reilly, Councilwoman Renzulli and Council President Paplauskas -5. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilman Ferri and Councilwoman Vargas -2.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Council Vice-President Brady, it was voted to approve the Class F liquor license. Motion passed on a vote of 5-2. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Germain, Council Vice-President Brady, Councilman Reilly, Councilwoman Renzulli and Council President Paplauskas -5. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilman Ferri and Councilwoman Vargas -2.

II. MISCELLANEOUS

- **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees