

LICENSE HEARING MINUTES
Clairview Holdings LLC, d/b/a Groveland Tap, 1834 St. Clair Avenue
Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 2:00 PM
Room 330 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Boulevard West
Nhia Vang, Legislative Hearing Officer

The hearing was called to order at 2:02 PM

Staff Present: Tom Ferrara, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) Licensing Inspector, Grace Wagner, DSI Zoning Inspector (remote participation); Monica Shaffer, Assistant City Attorney (remote participation); LaTiffany Porter, DSI Licensing Inspector; Greg Weiner, Executive Assistant

Licensee: Stephanie Shimp, Applicant/Owner; Blois Olson, Consultant; Kevin Kelly, General Manager

License Application: Add a Gambling Location license and upgrade to full Liquor On Sale and Liquor On Sale Sunday licenses

Other(s) Present: David & Kellie Connor, 1849 Berkeley Ave; Chris Morrisette, 1703 Jefferson Ave; Patrick Connolly, 762 Osceola Ave; Kevin Dolan, 2144 Princeton Ave; Erik Eastman, 261 5th St E; Matt Anderson, 370 Wabasha St N; Paul Weinberg, 4642 Cambridge Dr, Eagan

Legislative Hearing Officer Nhia Vang made introductory comments about the hearing process: This is an informal legislative hearing for a license application. This license application required a Class N notification to inform neighbors and the District Council about the application and provide them with an opportunity to submit comments. The city received correspondence of concern/objection, which triggered this hearing. Also received was an email of support from the district council.

The hearing will proceed as follows: DSI staff will explain their review of the application and state their recommendation. The applicant will be asked to discuss their business plan. Members of the community will be invited to testify as to whether they object to or support the license application. At the end of the hearing, the Legislative Hearing Officer will develop a recommendation for the City Council to consider. The recommendation will come before the City Council as a resolution on the Consent Agenda; the City Council is the final authority on whether the license is approved or denied.

There are three possible results from this hearing: 1) a recommendation that the City Council issue this license without any conditions; 2) a recommendation that the City Council issue this license with agreed upon conditions; or 3) a recommendation that the City Council not issue this license but refer it to the city attorney's office to take an adverse action on the application, which could involve review by an administrative law judge.

Minutes:

Tom Ferrara, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) gave a staff report for licensee Clairview Holdings LLC (License ID# DSIBLLIQ-000561-2026), d/b/a Groveland Tap, located at 1834 St Clair Avenue. The application is to add a Gambling Location license and upgrade to full Liquor On Sale and Liquor On Sale Sunday licenses. DSI is recommending approval with license conditions:

Existing License Conditions:

1. On a daily basis, the Groveland Tap staff will pick up all the trash directly in front the building and directly behind the building in the alley. Additionally, all trash will be picked up daily in the parking lot.
2. Outdoor service and consumption of food, wine, and beer will end at 9:00 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday nights with the area being cleared no later than 9:30pm, and at 10:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights with the area being cleared no later than 10:30pm.
3. The staff will monitor and control patron noise diligently, so that it does not create a disturbance in the neighborhood.
4. Signage shall be prominently posted at all entrances and exits to make patrons aware that when they leave the premises they are exiting into a residential neighborhood and should show respect and consideration for the residents. Additionally, all patrons and staff will exit the premises through the front door facing St. Clair Ave.
5. Signs will be placed on each outdoor table reminding patrons that they are in a residential area. They must show consideration for the neighbors and keep their noise down.
6. All activity taking place on the exterior of the property lot on which the licensed premises is contained must comply with applicable State and Local rules and regulations, including but not limited to Chapter 293 Noise Regulations of the City of Saint Paul Legislative Code.
7. The licensee and/or property owner shall ensure that the existing off-street parking spaces currently located within the lot at 0 St. Clair Ave remains available for patron parking.

Recommended Additional License Conditions:

8. Licensee agrees to operate the establishment in compliance with Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative Code as a “Restaurant”.
9. Licensee agrees to close the establishment at 12:00 a.m. midnight. All patron/customers shall vacate the premises by 12:30 a.m. each day of the week as per Section 409.02 of the City of Saint Paul Legislative Code.

The District Council 14 - Macalester Groveland Community Council submitted letters of support. Building is N/A; License is approved with conditions; and Zoning is approved.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is the license to sell on-sale beer and wine being removed?

Ferrara: Yes.

Grace Wagner, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) - Zoning, gave a staff report. The area is zoned T2 – Traditional Neighborhood. This is a permitted use. The use of a restaurant serving liquor is distinct from a bar, with that midnight closing time restriction. Gambling does not have a relation to the Zoning code. There are no parking minimum requirements for this application.

Hearing Officer Vang: Any questions?

Stephanie Shimp: Many conditions were placed in 2023, such as with the patio hours.

Hearing Officer Vang: Are you referring to Condition 2?

Shimp: Yes. I believe that most of those conditions were placed in 2023 in a hearing just like this after we've received our certificate of occupancy, after we'd already opened after a 6-month closure to do a \$2 million remodeling project. We went through the process, and it took almost 6 months from the time the check was cashed at the city, signifying our license was in progress, to the time we received a license. It was at that time in the spring of 2023 that all of these conditions were placed. At the time we had to not serve alcohol, even though we'd been serving in our restaurant when we received our certificate of occupancy in December. It's a very difficult process that we went through, which is why we agreed to these conditions. I have owned this business for almost 3 decades. It's difficult in the last 2 months due to the federal ICE occupation, and consumer habits have changed. We've seen a decline in beer sales. Guests want spirits or a low-alcohol cocktail. These often have lower Alcohol By Volume (ABV) content than beer. We lose customers because we don't have spirits. We recently lost a party of 50 because they learned we couldn't serve gin and tonics. We employ 50 people, and in 2023 put in \$2.2 million to update the building to be fully ADA. I even bought a parking lot, though I wasn't required to.

Hearing Officer Vang: Are you still maintaining the parking lot?

Shimp: Yes. 20 spots of surface parking. With the lot being contaminated, it can only ever be used as a parking lot. Consumers also want an experience, which is why we wanted to add charitable gambling. We intend to do pull tabs in partnership with Saint Paul Capitals Hockey Association, which is a feeder program for the Saint Paul combined high school team.

Hearing Officer Vang: Where are you in charitable gambling application process?

Shimp: It's in process.

Ferrara: The charity has submitted their endorsement materials. They can't get that until this goes through, and then they will have to wait for the first of the month following approval of this license.

Shimp: We are also contemplating bingo or meat raffles.

Hearing Officer Vang: Who does the training on this?

Ferrara: The Gambling Control Board (GCB) trains the gambling manager for the organization; the gambling manager trains the staff for the organization. GCB does most of the inspections, though we will come out if there is a complaint.

Shimp: We collaborate and create a space for them.

Ferrara: The gambling organization technically leases the space, and the rights to use a gambling license on the gambling site.

Hearing Officer Vang: Will pull tabs be open when the restaurant is open?

Shimp: Yes, but they may choose not to be open when we are not busy.

Ferrara: They have the ability to be there when they are open, but within that it is up to charitable organization.

Hearing Officer Vang: How many pull tabs will you have?

Shimp: 6-8 boxes.

Ferrara: E-tabs are allowed as well.

Hearing Officer Vang: They could have both?

Ferrara: They need paper tabs if they also have electronic tabs.

Hearing Officer Vang: Where will the tabs be?

Shimp: In the back near the kitchen. There's an alcove where we used to have booths and now there are kid's games there. The games would move out and the pull tabs would go there.

Ferrara: They do not need to have a booth. They can also sell from a machine or from the bar.

Shimp: It's about demand. We had the governor come in and wanted something we couldn't serve. When we did this in Highland Grill in 2017, we noticed food sales grew when spirits were added, and the percentage of alcohol sales decreased. People don't come if you don't have the choice. It's like not having a vegetarian item on the menu. When one person in the group isn't accommodated, the whole group goes elsewhere.

Hearing Officer Vang: Where do staff park?

Shimp: In the lot or in the neighborhood.

Hearing Officer Vang: If on the street, in the front part or back part of the restaurant.

Shimp: All parts.

Hearing Officer Vang: How many shifts do you have?

Kevin Kelly: 2 shifts, usually. Lunch and dinner.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Stephanie Shimp: We are great operators we support our community. We participate in events like National Night Out and the Mac-Groveland Community Council Frost Fest, which was just a couple of weeks ago. We feed Highland Park high school football teams, lacrosse clubs, and soccer teams. We're a community gathering spot. If the nativity parish had a dedicated restaurant and bar, it would be us.

Hearing Officer Vang: Are you the only restaurant in the area?

Shimp: Estelle is in the area. They have a liquor license and serve on the patio.

Hearing Officer Vang: Has your patio changed at all since 2023?

Shimp: No.

Blois Olson: There are some conditions imposed in 2023 that we want to remove. City staff forgot to schedule a hearing last time around, and they couldn't sell liquor for the whole summer because city staff missed the application, and we had to go through an expedited hearing process and had to tape off the bar because we couldn't serve them there. We agreed to conditions in that process so that we could open, but that was under duress. The check was cashed in November of 2022, and it wasn't until much later that we were told our application was not in process. We went to take delivery of liquor and were told that they couldn't deliver because the city had not transmitted our liquor license to the state. Another instance happened last year with our liquor license in April or May 2025.

Shimp: Before the cyberattack.

Olson: We had those two major challenges come from the city.

Shimp: These conditions are outside the expectation we hold other business to. My other businesses and my brother's businesses don't have this. The process should be fair for all applicants and not solve problems that don't exist. Conditions shouldn't be placed when there aren't big problems.

Olson: We request removal of conditions 1 – 7. 8 and 9 are because of the change in license, but the others should be removed.

Hearing Officer Vang: The type of application you applied for requires neighborhood notification. We have 17 district councils and 7 wards, each with a unique character from different communities. Conditions are shaped by community input. They can be standardized or applied uniquely. They may have happened because of concerns raised in hearing. If I find a concern valid, I can recommend council adopt a related condition.

Olson: These conditions are not consistent with other businesses in the same ward or district council.

Hearing Officer Vang: That's because they can be unique to your neighborhood. We only notify people who live within 350 feet of your licensed establishment, so issues may arise from the community that most of us here in the city may not be aware of and may result in investigation from the city. That's why we can't apply things more broadly.

Olson: We should not create conditions for “what-if” situations.

Hearing Officer Vang: I still have to consider what is brought to light and if it's backed up by supporting evidence.

Olson: Since 2023, there have been no complaints. There have been no issues before these conditions. This should not be determined by the loudest voices within 350 feet.

Hearing Officer Vang: Since 2023, there have been no condition violations according to Olson. With the information we have, acknowledging the cyberattack, have there been any issues?

Ferrara: We could not find anything. As far as the 2023 application is concerned, were there changes made to the liquor types or the liquor licenses themselves?

Olson: No, there was no liquor change because the patio was expanded. We were required to have public notification for the expansion of the outdoor liquor service area.

Ferrara: I can think of no reason for indoor liquor sales to stop if all that was being adjusted was outdoor service.

Greg Weiner: There was also an expansion of the indoor liquor service area into the bar.

Shimp: Into an area we already owned.

Weiner: But the liquor service area was not expanded to that indoor space.

Hearing Officer Vang: You would not have been prevented from serving in the whole restaurant, but rather just the bar area.

Shimp: It did.

Ferrara: It should have only prevented what was beyond the current service area at the time, unless there was a significant remodel that prevented the current area being maintained. I'll investigate the history, but I can't see a reason for that.

Olson: We were perplexed as well.

Shimp: Having gone through building review, zoning review, and receiving our certificate of occupancy in November or December 2022, we were surprised that the city told us to stop serving in April 2023, 4 months after being opened.

Ferrara: An area of the restaurant or the entire restaurant?

Shimp: An area.

Olson: At that point, we wanted to do whatever we could to open as soon as possible. Now that we're here again, this is our mindset.

Shimp: It's been a tough few years.

Hearing Officer Vang next invited interested parties to speak.

David Connor, 1849 Berkeley: I submitted a letter in opposition. The current conditions came because of a district council meeting as well as a license hearing. There was strong objection from people on my block on the north side of Berkeley Ave. We share an alley with Groveland Tap, which is now also a business that orients towards the ally. Many of the support letters are form letters. I also don't believe they are monitoring noise. I live the furthest away on the block and from 5 – 8pm you can hear voices. Then from 8 – 9pm you hear fewer but louder voices from people who've been drinking and don't realize how loud they are. You can watch the game on the Groveland Tap patio from my back porch when there aren't leaves on the trees. I take issue with these conditions being agreed to rush the process. The bar area opened to private parties in 2022. The bar is in a different building that they purchased, and they were illegally serving alcohol there. I'm also a member of Nativity Church. I take offense to an idea that the church is supportive of this. I'm also a former youth hockey coach, and I don't understand how they need this assistance from gambling. It's a successful organization. Parents with money pay for their kid's hockey gear. I'm all for helping the disadvantaged, but we don't need pull tabs here to accomplish that. I came here to ask to keep those 7 conditions. Could you clarify what conditions 2 and 7 are?

Hearing Officer Vang read condition 2.

D. Connor: I also want to talk about the applicant being a good neighbor and putting \$2 million into their expansion. Google Blue Plate and the covid relief money they received. Consider that maybe that money came from taxpayer funds. I also ask for a condition that employees and patrons enter and exit from St. Clair Ave. The former owner said this wasn't going to be a problem, but it is. Employees are going through the alley when it's dark out and cars are going through, and it's dangerous.

Hearing Officer Vang: That condition exists. How many homes use the alley?

Shimp: Nine.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is the alley how the patio is accessed?

Shimp: There's an emergency exit on the patio. If someone comes with a dog, they have to use that entrance on the patio, unless we have them parade their pets through the restaurant, which I don't think DSI or the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) would like. There are reasons for staff to go in and out of the patio exit, like taking out garbage or receiving deliveries. People also just go in and out our back door and that's normal.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is it a 2-way alley?

Shimp: Yes.

Hearing Officer Vang: How big are your delivery trucks?

Shimp: I always ask for a smaller box truck, though I can't control that. I also plow the alley, though I don't have to.

Hearing Officer Vang: When are deliveries?

Shimp: In the morning.

Hearing Officer Vang: When is trash picked up?

Shimp: Trash is a very difficult thing to manage.

D. Connor: There was an 18-wheel semi and 8am this morning blocking the alley, and a smaller box there as well, and they were both facing each other. 3 people would have been unable to get out of their garages. There are also apartment buildings on our side of the alley. At 5pm today, you won't see parking available for the entire block. Customers who can't find parking go through the alley, because they don't have enough parking. Employees should also not be going in through the alley to start their shift, and customers should not be entering and exiting through there either.

Hearing Officer Vang then gave Shimp the opportunity to respond.

Shimp: I provided parking even though I didn't need to. This is also an urban area. It's the sign of a healthy neighborhood. People choose where to buy homes. This building has been a bar since the 1940s. This is not new. I provide parking and organize shared parking with another business. I don't know what else there is to do. St. Paul wants density in places like this, and I imagine that will continue. Regarding the expansion, I've always owned the whole building. Because of an ADA requirement, we needed a new ramp. I reclaimed land I already owned from the tenants that were there.

Hearing Officer Vang: That is all within your service area now?

Shimp: Yes. We started that process in 2021 and had district council support.

Ferrara: Did the bar move?

Olson: The bar had to move.

Shimp: The city dropped the ball.

Chris Moreset, 1703 Jefferson Ave: I live 6 blocks away. The next closest bar to me is on Snelling Ave. I used to go to Groveland Tap more when I was younger and don't drink beer as much now. I prefer liquor as a better health choice. My wife and I also have 2 dogs, and we went to northeast Minneapolis to find an outdoor dog patio with liquor. I would walk to Groveland Tap if they served liquor. Most places don't have just beer and wine licenses anymore, and that is a big disadvantage. I'm in support of this application. I don't share the alley, but I wonder if other businesses in the area have these types of restrictions.

Hearing Officer Vang: I defer to CAO and DSI regarding that, but there could be emergency services to be considered.

Ferrara: I can't speak to other businesses right now, but the condition is there.

Moreset: For the gambling, these resources help subsidize and expensive sport, and there are people who otherwise haven't been able to play that have been enable by this charity. Pull tabs and other events are also fun. People want stuff to do.

Hearing Officer Vang then gave Shimp the opportunity to respond.

Shimp: If people are on certain medications, they choose spirits. They also have less carbs than beer. Younger people are also drinking less beer.

Kelly Connor, 1849 Berkely: I want to address things that were already said. Not all cases are the same and individual cases matter. I was at the hearing in 2023. The bar moved into the newly developed space. This wasn't a gun-to-the-head situation. Neighbors have a right to give input. This is a bait and switch, if they plan to change these conditions. That request was not known to neighbors. There used to not be a patio. Please refer to the letter and photos from the Tipping's about how their lives have been affected. I was also on the district council meeting when Groveland Tap came to use for Neighborhood STAR money for the parking lot. St. Paul money went into that. That wasn't just out of the goodness of their heart. There is also an issue of loud cleaning on the roof at 11pm.

Shimp: Hoods need to be cleaned at least twice a year, and the restaurant needs to be shut down for that. We can't shut down during regular hours to do that. I send out notices when we do that.

K. Connor: I never got that notice.

Shimp: The Tipping's get the notice. We also switched from gas to an electric generator to reduce noise and do it 4 times a year to prevent fires and keep the place smelling clean. I'm open to better ways to do it.

K. Connor: Don't do it at night if I'm working the next day. Can't you close down for the day?

Shimp: It's not typical for businesses to close to do this.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do we require this to be done during certain hours?

Ferrara: Not as a licensing matter, but their cleaning would have to abide by our noise ordinance.

K. Connor: Is bingo going to be on the back patio?

Shimp: I don't have a plan for bingo yet.

K. Connor: I would oppose that.

Ferrara: Lawful gambling is prohibited outside.

K. Connor: Is parking no longer required?

Wagner: Not since 2023.

K. Connor: The bar is for both food and drink?

Shimp: I don't know if there's a specific requirement that they must order food.

K. Connor: I'm talking about the bar.

Ferrara: The whole space is considered a restaurant. Patrons need to be seated for food or be on a waiting list for food to be served.

K. Connor: People can't just come in and get a drink?

Ferrara: Correct. They cannot.

Hearing Officer Vang: Condition 8 states that.

K. Connor: Why do they need to be open so late? Midnight is extreme.

Shimp: I can currently be open until 1am under my beer and wine license. I used to be able to open until 2am. My new limit would be midnight, if I'm serving liquor as a restaurant.

K. Connor: None of the letters in support are within 2 blocks. The patio is now open year-round and there are issues of noise, light pollution, and odors. Other letters show that we already put up with parking and noise issues late at night. This is out of step with the peace and quiet we have in our neighborhood and will negatively impact property values.

Hearing Officer Vang: Are there restrictions to when a patio can be open during the year?

Ferrara: Sidewalk cafes are limited. Private patios are not.

Shimp: Hours will not be extended. Hours will be limited from 1am closing to midnight.

Olson: Of the letters in opposition, 7 of the 11 have form language in them. 4 of them are from two people in one household.

Patrick Conley, 762 Osceola Ave: I am in support of this application. This is a great family-friendly restaurant. COVID and bureaucracy have hurt Shimp's business. I signed one of the support letters and organized fellow Nativity Church parents to sign as well. This is good for the community. For the gambling piece, this is needed for this charity. The big charities have already gobbled up all the places that allow pull tabs.

Ferrara: Lawful gambling organizations are limited to 5-6 sites max.

Conley: They got all the good ones.

Kevin Dolan, 2144 Princeton Ave: I'm in support of this application. I've lived at my house for 26 years and have been going to this spot before it was the Groveland Tap. It's our only option for a close walkable burger, and now with Snuffy's gone, it's our only spot for ice cream. I also agree with everything positive that's been said about the charity.

Shimp: When Snuffy's closed, we added ice cream to accommodate the ice cream needed.

Eric Eastman, 261 5th St E: I work in supplying restaurants, and I can think of no more reputable operator than Shimp. Thinks that people are upset about are outside her control, such as what type of truck is doing deliveries. This is also an urban area. This is what it's like. Regarding the liquor itself, many options have less alcohol than beer or wine, which shouldn't be an issue.

K. Connor: Can I ask a question?

Hearing Officer Vang: Yes.

K. Connor: I don't know who Blue Plate Restaurant Company is. If you google them, it says they were awarded 9.8 million in government money. This is AI, I don't know if it's accurate. If they're not Blue Plate, I'm wrong.

Olson: Blue Plate is the umbrella organization. It does not own the restaurant. Using Google AI is irresponsible for someone asking a business to be responsible. When the city was granting money to survive, that money was used to survive.

Shimp: I have a loan with sunrise banks.

Hearing Officer Vang closed the public hearing.

Ferrara: To clarify about the charitable gambling organization, they cannot get endorsement to operate until there is a lawful gambling location license at the business.

Hearing Officer Vang stated that after reviewing the records and testimonies from all parties, her recommendation will be forthcoming.

Olson: When would you want a follow-up letter?

Hearing Officer Vang: As soon as possible.

Olson: To also add, support from the district council was unanimous.

Hearing Officer Vang: If anyone has letters or additional comments, submit them in writing. I will consider them all.

Meeting ended at 3:32 PM