

LICENSE HEARING MINUTES
VB Mart LLC, dba Stop & Shop, 604 Western Ave N
Thursday, August 27, 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 2:00 PM

Staff Present: Tom Ferrara, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) Licensing Inspector, Grace Wagner, DSI Zoning Inspector (remote participation)

Licensee: Kiran Kethireddy, Applicant/Owner

License Application: Malt Off Sale and Tobacco Shop licenses

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 VB Mart LLC (License ID# DSIBLLOFS-001693-2026 & DSIBLTOBAC-001319-2026), d/b/a Stop & Shop, located at 604 Western Ave N. The application is for Malt Off Sale and Tobacco Shop licenses. DSI is recommending approval of the following license condition:

1. License holder will create a video surveillance camera and lighting placement plan (video surveillance plan) for the interior and exterior of the licensed premises. License holder will submit the video surveillance plan to the Saint Paul Police Department (SPPD) liaison with the Department of Safety and Inspection (DSI) for review and approval. In accordance with the

approved video surveillance plan, license holder will ensure that video surveillance camera system is in good working order, ensure it is recording 24 hours per day, ensure it can produce recorded surveillance video in a commonly used, up-to-date format, and ensure that accurate date and time of day are visible on all recorded video. License holder will retain surveillance video for a minimum of thirty (30) days. If an incident is deemed serious by SPPD, license holder shall make surveillance video immediately available for viewing by SPPD. If a copy of the surveillance video for a serious incident is requested by SPPD, license holder shall have the technology, materials and staff available to immediately make the copy. In all other cases, license holder shall provide a copy of the surveillance video to the requestor within 48 hours.

The license condition was already in place for this location.

No correspondence was received from the District Council 7 – Frogtown Neighborhood Association. submitted letters of support. Building is N/A; License is approved with conditions; and Zoning is approved.

Grace Wagner, Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) - Zoning, gave a staff report. The area is zoned B2 – Community Business. This is a permitted use. There are no parking minimum requirements for this application.

Hearing Officer Vang asked the applicant to talk about the business: history, hours of operation, number of employees, etc.

Kiran Kethireddy: We took over the business on July 1. We improved the camera monitoring, improved the lighting, and cleaned the place up. Our license is only for 3.2 off-sale beer. We don't encourage people to drink outside our location and will use our monitoring system to prevent that. Police Sergeant Matthew Arntzen has approved our camera plan. Our business won't cause any neighborhood disturbance.

Hearing Officer Vang: Were there any issues or complaints received for this location prior to their taking over this business?

Ferrara: No.

Hearing Officer Vang: Could you describe the parking situation?

Kethireddy: We have a small lot with 4 spaces. The spaces are open for customers or deliveries.

Hearing Officer Vang: Where is trash disposed of?

Kethireddy: There's a small metal container in the parking space.

Hearing Officer Vang: Was there a license active here earlier?

Ferrara: There was never a liquor license here.

Kethireddy: It's just tobacco and grocery now. We've been operating here for two months and have not served 3.2 beer yet.

Hearing Officer Vang: How has the neighborhood to your business?

Kethireddy: We've gotten a positive reception. People are walking longer distances for the 3.2 beer and look forward to a closer location.

Vang: Where in the store is the beer located?

Kethireddy: Next to the counter area, so we can keep control of it. If necessary, we can put a lock on it and unlock it when making a sale.

Hearing Officer Vang: Are cameras interior and exterior?

Kethireddy: Yes. We have cameras 16 total.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do you own the property?

Kethireddy: No

Hearing Officer Vang: Who will be managing this business?

Kethireddy: Me and my partner. No other staff are planned. It's family-owned.

Hearing Officer Vang: What are your hours?

Kethireddy: Sunday to Friday, 8am - 11pm, 7 days per week.

Hearing Officer Vang: Have you done this type of work before?

Kethireddy: We have a gas station in Minneapolis without liquor. We don't want it there because of that neighborhood's problems.

Hearing Officer Vang: Do they need to undergo alcohol awareness training for this license?

Ferrara: No, since it's non-intoxicating malt liquor.

Hearing Officer Vang next read into the record the letter of objection from Charlotte Lankford, which voiced concerns about the location's proximity to an elementary school and loitering in the alley. She then gave the applicant the opportunity to respond.

Kethireddy: The school is nearby and you can see the boundary wall, but the school entrance is on the other side of the building. We won't disrupt the neighborhood and don't want customers disturbing people. We have video monitoring just to be safe. We will be on-site to deal with any problems as well. 80-90% of customers are from the neighborhood. They live nearby and bring

their items back home. IDs will also be checked. Some regular customers complain when we check for tobacco, but we have to do it. We will do the same for 3.2 beer.

Hearing Officer Vang: How often is the parking lot cleaned?

Kethireddy: Our space is cleaned regularly. We don't want people parked for more than 30 minutes. The parking lot also has cameras and lighting. Recycling is also picked up once per week.

Hearing Officer Vang: Is the parking space shared?

Kethireddy: No. It's just for us. The lot closes at 11pm. There's no barrier but our alarm system will tell us if someone is there after hours

Hearing Officer Vang: Mr. Ferrara, could you address the concern about this business's proximity to a school?

Ferarra: Neither tobacco nor off-sale 3.2 malt liquor have a distance requirement to be away from school, as 3.2 beer does not meet our definition of intoxicating malt liquor.

Hearing Officer Vang stated that after reviewing the records and considering the testimonies from all parties, she will recommend to the City Council that they approve the license with the following agreed-upon condition:

1. License holder will create a video surveillance camera and lighting placement plan (video surveillance plan) for the interior and exterior of the licensed premises. License holder will submit the video surveillance plan to the Saint Paul Police Department (SPPD) liaison with the Department of Safety and Inspection (DSI) for review and approval. In accordance with the approved video surveillance plan, license holder will ensure that video surveillance camera system is in good working order, ensure it is recording 24 hours per day, ensure it can produce recorded surveillance video in a commonly used, up-to-date format, and ensure that accurate date and time of day are visible on all recorded video. License holder will retain surveillance video for a minimum of thirty (30) days. If an incident is deemed serious by SPPD, license holder shall make surveillance video immediately available for viewing by SPPD. If a copy of the surveillance video for a serious incident is requested by SPPD, license holder shall have the technology, materials and staff available to immediately make the copy. In all other cases, license holder shall provide a copy of the surveillance video to the requestor within 48 hours.

Meeting ended at 2:18 PM

The Conditions Affidavit was signed and submitted on August 4, 2026.