

Community Meeting on Spirit

5/23/2017

Dave from LU introduces; everyone introduces themselves.

Dave speaks about LU's mission statement. Discusses community process. Discuss that Spirit went through community process that resulted in a Conditional License Agreement (CLA) with conditions attached to their liquor license. A year and a half ago people complained about noise. Held meetings in May and June of last year. We monitored it through public safety and communicating with Spirit. After the summer, we haven't received any complaints since then. They are due for their liquor license renewal and want to make sure there are no more complaints. This would be a good chance to regroup and hear about how things are going and discuss their soundproofing improvements. And also planning a summer festival called Summer Recess in August. They need support for the festival, so this is a chance to hear from residents about the improvements they've made and address these matters. Ground rules discussed. Ground rules are distributed. Tom will take us through the changes they've made.

Dave opens it up to Tom Barr from Spirit.

Tom: Thanks everyone for coming. Since we've opened we've been doing everything to prevent sound from getting through building. We used spray installation foam for the roof, two inches of foam and a inch and a half of open cell foam. It helps deaden the room. They use it at 31st street film studios and for recording.

Question: Any ventilation?

No ventilation in here, in order to keep the sound in. The Moose used to block the windows to keep sound in. They did have two big industrial fans that we took out so we suffer not having ventilation in order to help sound. They built a huge floating wall and one of our small partners is a carpenter and he built it behind the black cloth.

Question: Is that the fire exit?

Four exits here. Everything passed all the inspections and it's a steel and brick building with outlaying wood.

Question: Do you have speakers outside?

No, we do not have speakers. We never turned them on to prevent complaints. Every other Tuesday we do a banjo mini concert but nothing is amplified, it's all acoustic and it's just for 2 and a half hours. It's a great vibe out there and a lot of neighbors come and hang out. If it's too loud we can work on it.

Comment: I have it on tape. The noise. It's impossible. My windows are closed, my doors are closed, and I can't hear the TV because there's thumping. Two or three weeks ago I heard music. There's no lights on but the music is coming.

Comment: I hear things past two o'clock in the morning, as recent as four or five days ago.

Tom: We haven't played outside. We had wrestling matches a while back. I'm sorry to hear that. You shouldn't be because you've noticed a big difference since the vestibule.

Comment: I looked out my door and no people, but sound. The upstairs door was even closed.

Tom: What can happen is if it's a bass heavy event, there's some residual. Not much we can do about that because we put a bunch of money into this back wall. The only thing we can do is get a new roof, but we don't have the funds yet to do that.

Question: Can the bass go down a bit?

Tom: A lot of people pay and come to hear that, so we really can't just turn down the bass for some of the shows.

Question: Does it have to be heavy enough that we hear it? We're in between two buildings and you can hear it in the living room which means there are three rooms around it and that's when bass heavy is one thing, but it's a matter of turning it down a little bit.

Tom: I wish it were that easy. It's a matter of some of these acts that come through that is part of their performance. They would go somewhere else.

Comment: Maybe they should go somewhere else. It comes down to we didn't buy the house to hear the bass. That's really important to us.

Tom: we created a studio door to help with the bass that we finished five months ago. It's airlocked, but fire safe and it's helped a lot. We brought over a specialist in acoustics and he essentially found out that bass goes through the roof and what we did is amazing and the floating wall and vestibule helped a lot but for some of those bass heavy things unless we were to get a \$50,000 new roof there's not much we can do because it goes up and falls out. We've exhausted everything and I do have a plan in three years to put a garden on the roof which would eliminate the problem completely and it would be great for the neighborhood but we can't afford it. We're a small business. But by putting up the rubber pavers, that would solve the problem. We do have plans to do it, it's just fiscally, we can't right now.

Question: How much?

Tom: \$50,000, for materials and labor and permitting.

Dave: Tom, can you give us a timeline of the improvements you've made? Has this made a difference?

Tom: Chris, you've noticed a difference, right?

Chris: I hear very little sound, but greatly diminished. When will you start working on this roof soundproofing? Next comment is how did you even get in here before this stuff was taken care of? I can't believe the city allowed you to buy this property without all this stuff taken care of first. Please explain that to me. Who takes part in this? Giving them a liquor license without making the necessary improvements.

Dave: We do not control liquor licenses, it's controlled by state. The process we've created is so residents understand what's happening so people can participate. We had a community meeting and we created a conditional license agreement. Part of the PLCB is that sound is not to go beyond the space. That is what created those complaints.

Chris: somebody was obviously responsible for letting them do this. Was there any feedback prior to them buying this property?

Dave: We can't control who buys property. We can oppose liquor licenses.

Chris: What I'm trying to say is I think that whoever it was from the city allowed this to happen and I didn't hear anything about it.

Dave: Did you guys participate in former community meetings?

Chris: I did, and we were told when it was going to be approved. And then none of us knew. None of us was given this information. And all of a sudden there was a place. I didn't feel like we were represented.

Tom: I've been trying to do everything I can.

Resident: The bass isn't what it was for me either.

Chris: I don't have anything personally against you. I want you guys to succeed. I like having this business in the neighborhood. I think it can do a lot for the neighborhood. I will do everything I can to support you but again you have to hold up your end of the deal.

Joanne: Parking is also one of my major issues.

Dave: We can do a better job of the process. We always try to have a community meeting in advance of the orange placard. Anyone who is in a certain number of square feet is able to file concerns or intervene.

Tom: That was listed everywhere. It was on our agenda.

Dave: Following that, we worked with Tom and Spirit to create more regulations around hours, backdoor remaining closed, etc. It's attached to their license.

Tom: it is attached to their license, which is difficult to make money. We had a lot of restrictions. If it was a normal liquor license, we would have more money to stay open.

Joanne: The problem I see is that I don't think you realize you're right in a neighborhood. And that makes it a totally different thing. We're next door neighbors and that becomes totally different. We pay taxes and don't expect our neighborhood to be a bar. None of us moved here to be next to a bar.

Resident: Lawrenceville only has less than half the numbers of bars they used to have.

Tom: It's unfortunate, but with being in a zone that's next to an urban industrial zone, you run that risk.

Dave: They are permitted by right to have this establishment.

Resident: I don't understand why you're having so much problem. I feel like theres more noise coming from brewery on 4900 block. They had a band playing. They make more noise than comes from here.

Tom: that studio door did numbers for the bass.

Thomas: Where do the front two doors go?

Tom: Our front office.

Thomas: How much plumbing is in bar? We could solve all of this if we moved the band to the other stage and put the bar at the other end.

Tom: It's the roof that's making the sound loud. It wouldn't matter to switch sides. I've done all the research here and the price of doing that would probably be more expensive than the roof.

John: You think bass would naturally project outward.

Dave: There's a noise ordinance. The noise ordinance says no noise off property after 10 pm.

Resident: I'm hearing music until 1 a.m.

Tom: we've also added risers for speakers to have them pointed down. We added all that spaghetti board above the stage and above that is we're trying to combat the bass by capturing it. Above the spaghetti board we put sound foam pads and in that corner that's a big sub trap. That triangle. There's foam up top.

Ray lives on a catty corner to the building.

Ray: Outside doesn't bother me, it's the music through the speakers outside.

Tom: We do not have music playing outside through speakers.

Ray: then id like to know where it's coming from.

Dave: Is it the bass that you're hearing?

Joanne: I haven't heard it in a while.

Dave: have you noticed change?

Ray: Oh yeah, I've noticed change. Less noise.

Thomas: Can you use white noise?

Tom: No, we can't. I've never heard anything like that. You could do it in a different area but using it here wouldn't affect it.

John: Maybe put something white noise outside?

Tom: That's a good idea. It would have to be loud enough for the person hearing the bass. It would be weird for people outside too.

Joanne: Bass vibrates all the way through. It's hard to deal with.

Tom: If you're not hearing everything else, but hearing the bass, it might be a lot.

Dave: It sounds like what's driving the noise is just the bass coming from the hall. How often do you guys have these?

Tom: Every other week, sometimes less. In between weddings and markets and charity events and a bunch of other stuff.

Ray: They told me to call the cops every time it happens, but that seems idiotic. It's not productive because it makes noise. Cops say quiet down, you quiet down. It's just an endless cycle. Where's the penalty for you disturbing the peace? We called the first time and I want the cops to stop it. He comes and says he was over there, and we could still hear it. Why no penalty? They wouldn't even listen to the cop. They kept playing until 2 am. Who wants to live with that?

Chris: I told you guys about this, but when this was a Moose, there were issues. Wrestling, bands, etc. It was the same old stuff. After the Moose shut down, we thought we'd get peace and quiet. The night of the first band here I couldn't believe it. Here we go again. Didn't anything happen?

Ray: It's because no one is getting fined. Every fine, it would be something.

Chris: there were issues with the building. Issues around here. The parking situation.

Dave: I hear you, I do want to make the point in all fairness that the Moose had a whole different set of issues associated with it, not just noise.

Chris: I never said it was.

Dave: There's a difference of scale here. Spirit is having this meeting and trying to be community-minded. To your point Ray, if you're having noise issues, we at LU certainly need to hear them. We haven't heard anything in almost a year now, so we assumed the issue had been resolved. We've been checking in with Zone 2 Police and Liquor Control Enforcement regularly and there were no complaints. We can't take action if we don't hear about it.

Tom: Whenever it is loud, if you want to give me a call, we can pay for soundproofing in your home. Of course with your design and thoughts in mind.

Ray: I can say it's much quieter than it was but still there. It's the bass.

Resident: I think you guys have done a lot and will continue to do a lot but with the parking to help this community right here with the parking, because it's not just Spirit. Maybe put something from the website to get them to park in your lot or 51st street?

Tom: Absolutely, we will put that on the website and signs in the building and out front.

Joanne: Also a sign as you come up those stairs on 50th. That would make a huge difference. A sign about parking.

Resident: My biggest complaint is having no place to park.

Chris: Since that Highmark lot isn't being used, can you lease that?

Vanessa: They let us put cones and put a couple of spaces for trucks, and at Goodwill they've let us use spots.

Chris: That should be made known as well.

Tom: people who use Hatfield are people who are friends with people, who've figured out the local tricks. We will definitely put up the signs and add it to the website.

John: Do ride sharing services have a partnership for small businesses? "Go to Spirit, get your first night free" kinda thing.

Tom: We have some outreach to them but nothing recently.

Joanne: we have one recent one. They literally are from pgh and look for it. That might be something with them. It would be helpful.

Joanne: I'm thinking of petitioning to halt new business until we have a parking garage.

Dave: On the topic of parking, we have advocated for strategic parking solutions for the district. Part of our agreement with Milhaus was to try to get a parking structure on their site, but there have been some obstacles and not a lot of political support and parking is very expensive. We've also been in conversation with Councilwoman Gross about a Parking Enhancement District, which would add meters to parts of Butler Street that currently do not have it and raise the costs of parking during peak hours when people are coming to the neighborhood. It would go until midnight. The idea with that is collecting those funds and it goes back into funding parking improvements.

Joanne: Neighborhood in Shadyside was rich enough that they got parking garages and they had influence.

Dave: I don't want to get too off the rails with parking. Let's try to focus on Spirit.

Joanne: Do you guys have any bands and mics outside during the summer?

Tom: We have a permit in for August 12th, 12-9 PM.

Joanne: that's a horrifying experience.

Tom: This is an outdoor food and music festival. 7-10 food vendors, all mostly Lawrenceville. This is different than Via. It's free, about a 1,000 people. The bands are really good. We're looking at Charles Bradley. You guys would like it. Family friendly. Bring kids. It is really loud and that's why we're applying for permit. The idea is to grow the event so it won't be held here. We're trying to move it to Arsenal Park or the Point or somewhere next year. This is the last year we'll do it here. I've had a lot of thank yous for when it happened. It's a celebration of summer and music and food and helps a lot of business out. 1-9 pm outside. Any amp will be over at 9 pm sharp. Then we'll move inside which we'll charge a cover charge and half the people will go away and we can only fit 195 down and 450 up. A lot of people will take off.

Dave: Will there be security?

Tom: We'll have at least 10 security. 5 inside, 5 outsourced security. We have an EMT we hire ourselves. If anybody is interested in the map, I have it. [Tom will email map and Dave will share it to everyone.]

Joanne: That's the only outdoor event this summer?

Tom: Maybe a wedding or two but no amplified music. People get married in the garden and it would be minimal.

Chris: Anything on the patio involving music?

Tom: Sometimes there's a few little events but nothing huge. There are small things that are earlier in the day but if anyone has an issue, we can address. This Sunday, we're having a barbeque thing with one person playing music and if it's too loud come on over, we'll turn it down and have barbeque for you.

Dave: Can you give us a heads up on smaller events, please?

Tom: Sure, that's a really good idea.

Vanessa: Wedding vows outside, rest is inside, just FYI.

Resident: I would object less if I knew in advance.

Joanne: I can't give away my entire summer for this, though.

Dave: We covered noise, parking, and outdoor events. Any other burning topics? Tom, for moving forward if there are outstanding issues or complaints, it sounds like you're willing to hear directly from folks, Tom?

Tom gave out his cell phone number for noise complaints.

Dave: I encourage folks to reach out to us at LU as well. We can pass it along to Liquor Control Enforcement and Zone 2 Police and are happy to do that, but obviously it's preferable to have strong relationships between business and residents so that these problems are worked out without involving the police. But we can't address these matters if we don't hear from you about them.