

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

**TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING
September 26, 2023, 7:15 p.m.,
Legislative Chambers**

**Re: Ordinance Permitting the Sale of
Alcoholic Liquor in Certain Zoning Districts
Under a Connecticut Craft Café Permit**

A p p e a r a n c e s:

Town Council Members Present:

MAYOR SHARI CANTOR

MARK ZYDANOWICZ

ALBERTO CORTES

CAROL BLANKS

BEN WENOGRA

MARY FAY

TIFFANI MCGINNIS

DEB POLUN

TODD DUMAIS

Town Planner

RICK LEDWITH

Town Manager

TOWN CLERK

LEON DAVIDOFF

1 (Begin: 7:15 p.m.)

2
3 PRESIDENT CANTOR: We will
4 begin our 7:15 public hearing. This is an
5 ordinance permitting the sale of alcohol
6 liquor in certain zoning districts under a
7 Connecticut craft cafe permit.

8 We will do a rollcall,
9 Mr. Davidoff.

10 THE CLERK: Thank you, Madam
11 Mayor.

12 Councilor Blanks?

13 COUNCILOR BLANKS: Present.

14 THE CLERK: Mayor Cantor?

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Here.

16 THE CLERK: Councilor Cortes?

17 COUNCILOR CORTES: Here.

18 THE CLERK: Councilor Fay?

19 COUNCILOR FAY: Here.

20 THE CLERK: Councilor
21 McGinnis.

22 COUNCILOR MCGINNIS: Here.

23 THE CLERK: Councilor Polun?

24 COUNCILOR POLUN: Here.

25 THE CLERK: Deputy Mayor

1 **Sweeney.**

2 (No response.)

3 **THE CLERK: Counselor**

4 **Wenograd?**

5 **COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Here.**

6 **THE CLERK: Counselor**

7 **Zydanowicz?**

8 **COUNCILOR ZYDANOWICZ: Here.**

9 **PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,**
10 **Mr. Davidoff.**

11 **Okay. Mr. Ledwith, you can**
12 **start and kick it off.**

13 **MR. LEDWITH: Thank you, Madam**
14 **Mayor. For the record, Rick Ledwith, Town**
15 **Manager. Our next public hearing is a**
16 **ordinance permitting the sale of alcoholic**
17 **liquor in certain zoning districts under a**
18 **Connecticut cafe, craft cafe permit.**

19 **This ordinance would permit a**
20 **new permit type, Connecticut craft cafe**
21 **permits, which would allow for existing or**
22 **new businesses to take advantage of this new**
23 **class of liquor permit created by the State**
24 **of Connecticut.**

25 **This ordinance was also**

1 discussed at our May 3rd CPED meeting and
2 also received positive referrals from both
3 our Town Planning and Zoning Commission, and
4 the Capital Region Council of Government.

5 Through you, Madam Mayor, I'll
6 turn it over to our Town Planner Mr. Dumais,
7 who will provide a brief summary of this
8 ordinance change.

9 MR. DUMAIS: Thank you, Mr.
10 Manager.

11 Madam Mayor, members of the
12 Council, for the record, Todd Dumais, Town
13 Planner.

14 As the Town Manager said, this
15 is a relatively straightforward ordinance
16 that seeks to amend our current zoning
17 standards which authorize certain classes of
18 liquor permits to be issued under a zoning
19 permit endorsement by the zoning officer
20 based on a relatively new class of permit.

21 So by way of background, the
22 State of Connecticut Department of Consumer
23 Protection Liquor Control Division is really
24 the ones that authorize, review and regulate
25 liquor permit types, and they administer the

1 licensing procedures for the sale of
2 alcoholic liquor consistent with state
3 statute.

4 It involves the classification
5 and the sale of alcohol into several dozen
6 different permit types. That list changes
7 periodically and grows. One of those
8 relatively recent changes was the creation of
9 the Connecticut craft cafe permit.

10 This permit was designed to
11 permit establishments that already have a
12 manufacturing liquor permit. So in this
13 context there are a number of different
14 classes of permits, but we can think of a
15 brewery as a manufacturer, a distillery,
16 similarly a farm winery, although it's a
17 slightly different classification, but anyone
18 that produces locally produces alcoholic
19 liquor in those varieties.

20 And the new permit type would
21 allow one of those permit holders to sell
22 other liquor that they don't produce on site,
23 but that's produced in the state of
24 Connecticut in their establishment. So it
25 expands their offerings and really supports a

1 local manufacturer liquor product that's
2 produced in Connecticut and sold.

3 There are a couple of caveats
4 and restrictions that DCP does regulate as
5 part of that process, but consistent with any
6 of the permit types the liquor control
7 division requires that a municipality -- and
8 there's several entities in the municipality
9 that have to endorse a liquor permit. One of
10 those is the zoning enforcement officer. The
11 zoning enforcement officer is charged with
12 ensuring that class of liquor permit is
13 permitted in the zoning standards.

14 So several months ago one of
15 our proprietors in town, a business owner who
16 is a brewery, and you may hear from shortly,
17 was interested in pursuing this type of
18 permit. And we did not have a place for it
19 in the zoning. So our zoning officer
20 couldn't endorse the permit.

21 So we brought this to
22 subcommittee. The subcommittee of the
23 Council, CPED was interested in pursuing it
24 and that's why we're here this evening. The
25 actual request before the Council to amend

1 the ordinance is really limited to one
2 section. It's our alcoholic beverages
3 section, under Section 177-36.

4 And the simple change there
5 would be to add in the definition where it
6 concurrently states the standard. It says,
7 the sale of alcoholic liquor under a
8 manufacturing permit, including any subclass
9 of manufacturing permits listed in the
10 general statutes, and the sale of alcoholic
11 liquor under Connecticut Craft Cafe Permit is
12 a permitted main use.

13 That's what we're trying to
14 do, is allow our zoning officer to endorse
15 this use. It is narrowly focused to an
16 existing manufacturer under those permits,
17 and currently that's two in the community.
18 We have two breweries, so that's the only two
19 manufacturer permits in town.

20 As the Town Manager said, this
21 was referred to both the Capitol Regional
22 Council of Governments and the Town Planning
23 and Zoning Commission. The Planning and
24 Zoning Commission found this favorable and
25 consistent with the POCD, and the Capital

1 Regional Council of Governments found no
2 apparent conflicts of interest -- I'm sorry,
3 conflicts with any regional plans or policies
4 of neighboring towns.

5 And that concludes my
6 presentation, Madam Mayor.

7 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
8 Mr. Dumais.

9 Again, this was discussed in
10 committee, and I want to first ask if there
11 are any public comments on the assignment
12 sheet?

13 And Mr. Clerk, have you
14 received any?

15 THE CLERK: Madam Mayor, we
16 have not received any written comments.

17 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay.

18 Are there any public comments?

19 Okay. I see one person signed
20 up, Christopher Conway. State your name and
21 your position.

22 CHRISTOPHER CONWAY: Sure.
23 For the record, my name is Christopher
24 Conway. I'm the President and CEO of the
25 West Hartford Chamber of Commerce, located at

1 948 Farmington Avenue.

2 I would like to mention that I
3 did e-mail this letter last week. It does
4 not seem to have made it into the record.
5 Okay -- well, I'll read it anyway.

6 On May 4, 2023, Cody McCormack
7 of WeHa Brewing and Roasting met with the
8 Chamber's Economic Development Committee
9 seeking support for the change to the
10 existing town ordinance for allowable liquor
11 permits to include the craft cafe permit.
12 This would allow for the sale of
13 Connecticut-produced wines, ciders, and
14 spirits. This was adopted by the State in
15 2022, and has been approved by several towns
16 and cities, including New Britain,
17 Manchester, New Hartford, Windsor Locks, and
18 Hartford.

19 The Economic Development
20 Committee of the Chamber voted to recommend
21 the Chamber's Executive Committee fully
22 endorse the proposal, which they did on May
23 8, 2023.

24 The West Hartford Chamber
25 believes that this would be good for West

1 Hartford businesses, such as WeHa Brewing and
2 Roasting by allowing them to offer a wider
3 portfolio of choices to their customers.
4 Additionally, this would give
5 Connecticut-based producers of locally-made
6 wine, spirits, ciders, more opportunity to
7 distribute their products to new customers.
8 Combined, this will be a strong economic
9 driver.

10 For these reasons, the West
11 Hartford Chamber urges the Town Council to
12 approve Mr. McCormack's request to expand the
13 current ordinance to include craft cafe
14 permits.

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
16 Mr. Conway. I appreciate your input.

17 All right. Is there anybody
18 here that would like to speak to this public
19 hearing?

20 Just state your name and
21 address, and if you do not either have a
22 business or residence in West Hartford, we
23 need to suspend the rules -- but that's not
24 you.

25 CODY MCCORMACK: For the

1 record, I'm Cody McCormack, owner of WeHa
2 Brewing.

3 So I was the one that
4 originally brought this forth to Todd and
5 Chris from the West Hartford Chamber. What
6 this really is about is, first, supporting
7 other Connecticut producers, distilleries,
8 wineries that are making Connecticut product.
9 And what this permit allows us to do is to
10 support those businesses and sell their
11 product, while also offering our customers a
12 wider portfolio of, not just offering just
13 beer that we manufacture, but also offering
14 other products that we offer as well.

15 So that's the reason for us
16 bringing it forward, is to support the
17 community and also to offer our customers,
18 and it puts us at a competitive disadvantage
19 from other breweries in the area because they
20 now have this permit and we don't. So some
21 may go to the brewery and they can get a wine
22 or a cocktail, but they won't come to ours
23 because we don't offer that.

24 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay.
25 Thank you very much, Mr. McCormack. I

1 appreciate that, and you have a great place.

2 All right. Are there any
3 questions from the Council?

4 THE CLERK: Excuse me, Madam
5 Mayor?

6 PRESIDENT CANTOR: I'm sorry.
7 Mr. Davidoff?

8 THE CLERK: I need to correct
9 the record.

10 We did receive an e-mail from
11 Mr. Conway. It was received 11:51, September
12 22, 2023.

13 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you.

14 THE CLERK: I stand corrected.

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay.
16 Thank you.

17 All right. Again, is there
18 anybody that would like to speak to this
19 public hearing?

20
21 (No response.)
22

23 PRESIDENT CANTOR: All right.
24 Any questions from the Council?

25 Ms. Fay?

1 COUNCILOR FAY: Yes, thank
2 you. I was just wondering, was there any
3 reaction from other retailers, liquor stores,
4 or others who would sell competing products?

5 Has there been any new
6 feedback from them, because now we're
7 increasing the competition with the local mom
8 and pop liquor store? Thank you.

9 MR. DUMAIS: We have not heard
10 any, Councilor Fay, through any public
11 comment process or phonecalls or e-mails.
12 Again, this would be for, kind of,
13 consumption as part of the brewery options.
14 So it doesn't necessarily impact the sale of
15 package store to package store, which is a
16 separate class of permit.

17 So it doesn't increase their
18 competition, per se. It's geared more
19 towards the in-person consumption -- but I
20 don't think it precludes purchasing, although
21 Mr. McCormack would probably be able to tell
22 us better if you could purchase another craft
23 cafe product to consume offsite like you
24 would at a package store.

25 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,

1 **Mr. Dumais.**

2 **Ms. Fay?**

3 **COUNCILOR FAY: Thank you.**

4 **PRESIDENT CANTOR: Any other**
5 **questions, comments?**

6
7 **(No response.)**

8
9 **PRESIDENT CANTOR: All right,**
10 **I think all the questions from the Council**
11 **are done.**

12 **I'm going to read into the**
13 **record again, but officially, a letter dated**
14 **September 15, 2023, from Town Planning and**
15 **Zoning Commission, recommending approval; a**
16 **letter dated September 15, 2023, from Capital**
17 **Region Council of Governments finding no**
18 **apparent conflict with the regional plans and**
19 **policies, or the concerns of neighboring**
20 **towns.**

21 **And with that, I will adjourn**
22 **this public hearing.**

23
24 **(End: 7:26 p.m.)**

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing 15 pages are a complete and accurate computer-aided transcription of my original verbatim notes taken of the Public Hearing in RE: ORDINANCE PERMITTING THE SALE OF ALCOHOLIC LIQUOR IN CERTAIN ZONING DISTRICTS UNDER A CONNECTICUT CRAFT CAFÉ PERMIT, held before the West Hartford Town Council, at Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, Room 314, West Hartford, Connecticut, on September 26, 2023.



Robert G. Dixon, CVR-M 857
My Commission Expires:
6/30/2025