



Agreement reached on liquor license

Tango Tapas owner
to sell permit after
residents' protest

BY BRENT JONES
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The owner of Sky Lounge/Tango Tapas will sell his liquor license after reaching an agreement with several Federal Hill residents who say the establishment turns into a rowdy after-hours dance club that disrupts the community.

John Hargrave will transfer his license in the next six months in exchange for the residents' withdrawing their protest of the renewal of his liquor license. The agreement was accepted by the city liquor board at a hearing yesterday afternoon.

Hargrave will be allowed to operate the restaurant, in the 1000 block of Marshall St., in the interim but will not be allowed to have after-hours parties, disc jockeys or dancing.

Michelle Wirberger Pierce of the Community Law Center, who assisted the residents, called Hargrave's decision a huge victory for Federal Hill. She said that the residents' main concern was Hargrave's zoning license, which she says does not allow the restaurant to become a club at night.

Hargrave declined comment after the hearing.

Tango Tapas stops serving food at 10:30 p.m. but remains open until 2 a.m., according to Pierce.

The top floor of the building is commonly known as Sky Lounge.

Pierce said that all possible bar licenses are secured in Federal Hill, and that some owners attempt to circumvent that limitation by getting a restaurant license and operating as a de facto nightclub.

"We don't need any more bars down here," Pierce said. "And it's not that the residents of Federal Hill are anti-bar or anti-dancing. Our main concern is that this is a restaurant license."

The restaurant has been opened about seven years and offers a mostly Spanish-themed menu.

Yesterday's hearing was the final renewal-protest case until next year for the liquor board.

The board, which consists of Chairman Stephan Fogleman and commissioners Elizabeth C. Smith and Harvey E. Jones, was called before the City Council last month after council President Stephanie C. Rawlings-Blake said that she frequently hears complaints from constituents about liquor law enforcement.

Since March, liquor commissioners have rescinded the licenses for the owners of four establishments — Chuck's Place in Highlandtown, Sugar Hill Tavern on Druid Hill Avenue, Linden Bar and Liquors in Reservoir Hill and Club Mate in Brooklyn — the highest number of revocations in years.

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