

End of License Year Report 2019 - 2020

Board of Liquor License Commissioners for Baltimore City

Throughout the 2019-2020 License Year (LY20), which normally runs from May 1 to April 30 of each year, the Board of Liquor License Commissioners for Baltimore City (Board) improved its efforts to ensure compliance from its licensees with Federal, State, and Local laws. This year, the license year was extended by Governor's Executive Order until December 31st, 2020, due to the COVID-19 crisis. The Board and staff adapted to the new realities of COVID-19 according to each change in Mayoral or Governor Executive Orders, and also provided guidance for licensees in this changing landscape. The Board continued participation in Mayor's Safety Walks (Pre-COVID-19) and collaborated with other City agencies through the Social Club Task Force, leading to numerous violations, suspensions, and further investigations. The Board continued its Community Engagement Initiative, with the Community Liaison adapting to the virtual meeting environment, meeting with associations across the City and bringing feedback to the organization, as well as addressing any licensee concerns from communities. In May 2020, the Board shifted to a fully virtual hearings format, at times holding two hearings in a week. Additionally, the Board furthered efforts to increase transparency through revision and updating of Standard Operating Procedures.

In 2020, Commissioner Robert E. Guye joined the Board, appointed by then Mayor Bernard C. "Jack" Young, replacing Commissioner Elizabeth Hafey, who resigned earlier in the year.

Below are some of the efforts the Board initiated and implemented in LY20 to improve agency operations, increase transparency, and hold all stakeholders accountable for compliance with the law:

- The Board continued to work with Police, Fire, Health, and Housing Departments through the Social Club Task Force to conduct proactive joint inspections and integrate enforcement resources, as well as to ensure compliance with Executive Orders related to COVID-19.
- In February, the Board issued its inaugural Welcome Packet for the purposes of educating its licensees and improving their compliance with State laws and BLLC Rules and Regulations.
- The Board adopted rules and regulations concerning the Related Event Promoter's Permit for the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) Tournament, developed in a process with multiple stakeholders.
- In December 2020, following a process involving multiple stakeholders, including the community, Baltimore Police Department, and others, the Board adopted and published regulations requiring surveillance systems for Class A, Class A-2, and Class A-7 Licenses, as authorized by Alcoholic Beverages Article 12-1804.2 (c)
- The Board created the groundwork for BLLC Equity Stat, a process for measuring equitable distribution of services and response, which will go into full use in early 2021.
- Through the Community Liaison position, the Board connected with over 3,500 citizen stakeholders at over 120 association meetings, adapting to attend virtual meetings during the COVID-19 crisis.

The following are new measures the Board implemented to adapt and respond to the COVID-19 crisis:

- The Board provided new guidance to licensees and the public for each change during the COVID-19 crisis due to Mayoral or Governor Executive Order, and created a special section of the website for COVID-19 related announcements and guidance: <https://llb.baltimorecity.gov/bllic-covid-19-updates>
- The Board adapted to COVID-19 restrictions by creating a virtual forum through the WebEx platform in order to hold hearings safely. The Board switched to two hearings in a week in order to accommodate the changes.
- The Board participated in the Design for Distancing program, as well as waived temporary outdoor permit fees, in order to help licensees adapt to new regulations and continue business safely during COVID-19.
- The Board, under the authority granted to it through Executive Order 20-06-19-01, voted unanimously to waive in total all annual renewal alcoholic beverage license fees for the 2020-2021 license period.