

advocate_na	advocate_na	advocate_en	advocate_ph	street_addre	city	state	county	zipcode
Jesse	Rangel	rang0055@y	651-208-861	1935 Glenhill	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-4165
Partrick	Connolly	patrick@velc	612-669-229	762 Osceola	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-3326
Joe	Hickey	jphickey9@g	612-770-480	2257 Wagon'	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55120-1381
Peggy	Knutson	pegknute@gr	320-304-151	115 50th Ave	Benson	MN	Swift County	56215-1356
Anne	Helleson	annehelleso	612-360-702	1745 Stanfor	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-2041
Carlton	Fontaine	carlondoyl@	952-210-898	407 Woodlaw	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1341
Jen	Berg	berg1636@g	612-363-988	1425 HARTFC	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-1668
Kelli	Flaherty	kelli484@gm	651-528-370	1598 cohans	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55117-3547
Heide	Baker	heimer2@ho	763-482-959	1298 Laurel A	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55104-6929
Matt	Anderson	mattpetejr@	651-408-507	3872 cinnab	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55122-1614
Kevin	Dolan	kdolan1972@	651-592-161	2144 Princet	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1119
Jim	Runyon	jrunyon34@g	651-246-797	339 Woodlaw	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1239
John	Weiberg	jnwelberg@g	651-341-950	1949 wellesk	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1619
Casey	Welch	casey.mwelc	651-271-068	667 Josephin	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-1222
Andy	Hartung	andy.buddha	612-327-867	1776 st Clair	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1939
Michael	Vannelli	michaelvann	952-210-320	1750 James F	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-3645
Jacob	Smith	smith.jacob9	952-693-159	2121 Minneh	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55119-3931
Tricia	Eibert	trunyon5@ya	651-246-797	784 lower col	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-2712
Bob	Runyon	bobrunyon67	651-208-319	1830 Eagle ri	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-4267
Chris	Runyon	chris.runyon	651-208-319	1830 Eagle Ri	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-4267
Sheila	T	sheilaboland	651-329-632	896 Watson e	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55102-3718
Nate	Nelson	nelson.nate@	952-221-287	2088 James A	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1316
Jimmy	Keis	jpkeis3@gm	651-324-575	1022 Victoria	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-4209
Bob	Fenlon	bob.denlon@	612-237-107	665 Woodrid	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-1809
Joel	Wolf	joelwolf_181	651-208-661	1958 Jefferso	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1603
Joe	Odman	joeodman@g	651-468-800	1245 Portlan	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55104-6946
Chad	McCauley	chade.mccat	651-280-832	516 Cretin A	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-1128
Sean	Van Gemert	smvangem@	612-670-346	189 Woodlaw	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1140
John	Peine	john.peine@	612-251-677	1914 Berkele	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1630
Mike	Osborne	mosborne11	651-272-055	1398 80th Str	Inver Grove F	MN	Dakota Coun	55077-3432

Alyssa	Dunnigan	alyssa.dunni@ 612-964-223 1040 Brompt Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55118-1002
James	Dougherty	jdoughe3@gr 651-363-463 2118 W Jame Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55105-1316
Christopher	Fabel	chrisf@willow 651-313-548 3934 Princet Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55123-2535
David	Brooks	jbillsbrooks@ 314-601-257 1001 Ashlanc Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55104-7002
Molly	Sternquist	boland987@ 651-280-034 958 Sherren Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55113-4420
David	Shields	david.shields 651-235-182 839 Park Plac Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55118-2741
Megan	Thibodeaux	megankg@liv 320-380-301 760 Linwood Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55105-3322
Shawn	Prestegaard	sprestegaard 651-338-042 6409 Sherwo Minneapolis	MN	Hennepin Co 55435-1521
Mark	Dunnigan	markdunzy@ 651-208-898 1040 Brompt Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55118-1002
Thomas	Sampair	tomsampair@ 651-216-033 1856 Wellesl Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55105-1615
Anne	Peine	annie.peine@ 651-343-427 650 Hidden C Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55118-3753
Shawn	Woessner	spw_msp@y 987-654-321 1134 Orchard Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55118-4146
Summer	Lagos	lagos.soccer 651-714-515 1885 Lincoln Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55105-1422
Steph	Shimp	stephanie@t 612-916-016 2220 Oliver A Minneapolis	MN	Hennepin Co 55405-2441
Dan	Ehrmantrau	dehrm72@gr 651-387-255 2096 Lower S Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55116-2803
Jennifer	Lorenz	jenniferhlore 612-719-679 769 Holly Ave Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55104-7135
Douglas	Niemela	dougniemela 651-428-696 2084 James a Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55105-1316
Mark	Runyon	mmrunyon54 651-246-889 2177 Upper s Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55116-2823
Maureen	Hartung	maureenhart 218-831-002 2171 Berkele Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55105-1205
Katie	Pevan	katie.pevan@ 952-210-325 13705 Fernai Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55124-5012
Joseph	Baker	joseph.baker 218-301-959 1298 Laurel A Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55104-6929
Nina	Kleinschmidt	ninaarevalo@ 415-596-128 8785 Walton Bloomington	MN	Hennepin Co 55438-1353
Emilie	Love	emilie.meiss 651-343-433 1656 Wellesl Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55105-2006
Maggie	Keyes	keyes.me@g 724-331-498 1027 London Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55118-1016
Caroline	Stommes	caroline.nyst 651-207-740 205 Clevelan Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55105-1105
Katie	Thornton	Katie.Thornt 651-955-548 1398 66th Str Inver Grove H	MN	Dakota Coun 55077-0400
Paul	Weinberg	paul.weinber 651-373-265 266 s Warwic Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55105-2446
Travis	Zweber	travis.zweber 651-724-413 1337 Bidwell Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55118-3132
Courtney	Roy	layercourtne 651-675-672 1696 Mississi Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55116-1825
Lindsey	Hickey	lindsey.hicke 651-208-701 2257 Wagon Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55120-1381
Alissa	Runyon	alissarunyon 651-895-960 339 Woodlav Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coun 55105-1239

Kathy	Kimlinger	kimlingers@c	651-285-081	1395 Juliet A	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-2502
Melissa	Mack	Melfos27@a	612-272-154	1899 Stanfor	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1653
Michael	Murray	michael@mi	651-208-773	434 FAIRVIEW	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1706
Shawn	Hansen	smdhansen@	310-849-498	237 Woodlaw	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1143
Caitlin	Valentine	caitlinval@y	612-751-752	717 Ottawa A	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55107-2559
Karin	Haas	karinhaas@g	651-441-199	2150 Goodric	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1020
John	Marshall	marshalljohn	612-414-540	1845 Jefferso	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1663
Andy	Pieper	ajpieper@gr	651-402-206	1876 Wellesl	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1615
Jen	Marshall	jenniferabbo	651-442-138	1845 Jefferso	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1663
Susan	Herrlein	eibertm@ya	651-269-346	14635 50th S	Afton	MN	Washington C	55001-9607
Brian	Bohlig	btbohlig@gm	818-648-100	4804 Kelvin A	Woodland Hi	CA	Los Angeles C	91364-3403
Mairzy	Gatrell	mairzyrussell	651-260-468	1917 Bayard	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-1214
Sarah	Eibert	sceibert@ne	651-497-088	27920 N Mon	Rio Verde	AZ	Maricopa Co	85263-5093
Therese	Steinhoff	theresesteinl	612-251-079	1872 wellesl	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1615
Theresa	Hennis	tmhennis@h	651-503-643	1850 Wellesl	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1615
Taryn	Seys	nutritaryn@g	651-353-077	666 Ashland	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55104-7187
Matt	Egan	mjegan12@g	651-283-401	1407 Wachtl	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-2718
Sara	Schmidt	saraschmidt	612-220-753	1866 Wellesl	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-1615
Mary	Gales	mmgales63@	612-743-258	5400 157 St V	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55124-6593
Charlie	Sparrow	sparrow.char	612-845-131	2186 7th St V	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-3108
Alan	Foley	alanfoley@gr	763-442-791	2156 Watson	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-1146
Lisa	Ewald	lisaewald19	651-335-331	536 Portland	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55102-2219
Daniel	Fugina	Fugina.danie	651-246-071	953 Stratford	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-4215
Paul	Moffatt	pfmoffatt@h	312-608-264	1665 Pinehur	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-2159
Nick	Murphy	nrmrphy@yah	651-295-168	1078 Linwoo	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55105-3251
Ion	Skillrud	ijskillrud@gr	612-387-261	1921 Saunde	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-2016
Tara	Schletz	tashcr@hotn	651-353-654	705 Sylvanda	Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-1714
Eric	Perry	ericperryem	612-226-899	2098 Upper s	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-2847
Tom	Ryan	tpryanjr@gm	303-625-396	1931 Saunde	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-2016
Shannon	Janssen	gsjanssen@g	651-249-871	6487 Pheasa	Circle Pines	MN	Anoka Count	55014
Jeff	Lepley	j.lepley1@gr	612-790-006	1756 Highlan	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour	55116-2113

Morgan	Catlin	mfcatin@ya	612-987-646	1984 Palace , Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55105-1730
Trisha	Burt	trisha.delane	651-208-256	1745 Pinehur Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-2118
Tom	Burt	tom@reclain	651-894-470	1745 Pinehur Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-2118
Virginia	Ryan	virginia.e.rya	651-206-420	1931 Saunde Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-2016
Matt	Funk	mattfunk77@	651-246-389	724 Lexington Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-2349
Shannon	Thomas	shannonmari	952-451-826	1780 Diane R Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55118-3692
Jason	Thibodeaux	j.thibodeaux	320-380-301	760 Linwood Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55105-3322
Kelly	Welch	kmhennes@	952-210-816	667 S Josephi Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-1222
Colleen	Sullivan	colleensulli@	952-270-326	16689 Lakeville	MN	Dakota Coun	55044
Kelly	Bester	kellybester@	651-755-256	1337 Saint Cl Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55105-2844
Bridget	Neurer	bneurer@ho	651-253-955	1605 Hartfor Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-1410
Will	Sullivan	sullivan@ms	952-953-933	Lakeville, MN Lakeville	MN	Dakota Coun	55044
Tim	Dolan	tdolan@sout	281-850-662	3510 Avalon ! Spring	TX	Montgomery	77386-3666
Elizabeth	Longval	ecaturia@ho	651-246-910	1753 Pinehur Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-2118
Dan	Rosedahl	danrosedahl	651-338-187	1765 Ashlanc Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55104-6036
John & Kerste	Reich	reich.john@	612-669-610	1822 Jefferso Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55105-1622
Maureen	Dunnigan	dunzyy@yah	651-224-619	168 N Griggs Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55104-6407
Megan	Mulligan	mulligan.me	612-419-040	600 Mississi Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-1061
Julie	Bustos	julie.bustos@	612-405-080	1780 Goodric Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55105-1907
Mike	Mulligan	mulligan.mic	414-899-206	600 Mississi Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-1061
Kathrine	Russell	katie.a.russe	612-275-302	1287 Wellesl Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55105-2816
Tony	Caruso	tonycaruso6	651-210-463	2490 Westvie Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun	55120-2600
Kara	Lepley	kara3383@g	651-497-524	1756 Highlan Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-2113
Suzanne	Hansen	shansen@tin	213-220-332	237 Woodlav Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55105-1143
Gary	Lingen	garylingen@i	858-952-417	1588 W Rom Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-2422
MICHELLE	Doyle	michelle.j.do	720-201-053	1878 Hampsl Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-2403
Christine	Paone	stinedunniga	651-208-898	16288 winter Andover	MN	Anoka Count	55304-7733
Tara	Andrist	tmsoccer19	507-261-961	1993 James A Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55105-1719
PATRICK	MARTIN	padraigtimot	651-295-859	1881 Jefferso Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55105-1663
Dan	Unze	djunze111@	651-231-633	1438 Berkele Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55105-2423
Emily	Medcraft	niem0075@g	651-592-184	1232 Scheffe Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Coui	55116-1715

Megan	Junius	mjunius@me 651-261-364 1365 Summit Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55105-2219
Amy	Perry	amyperryem@ 612-226-899 2098 Upper S Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55116-2847
Laura	Murphy	LKMurphy@l 952-428-901 1919 Hunter Saint Paul	MN	Dakota Coun 55118-4153
Lindsay	Leonard Nels	lnelson@916 651-246-815 2088 James A Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55105-1316
Melissa	Pearson	m_antonovic 651-269-935 1276 Laurel A Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55104-6927
Mark	Hanno	mhanno@att 763-607-621 1537 Eleanor Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55116-2265
Kelly	Rand	Kellyrand122 651-808-145 1260 Ashlanc Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55104-6910
Stefanie	Goodlund	goodbakk@y 612-269-358 1721 Hampsl Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55116-2457
Ben	Sandvik	bsandvik15@ 651-315-348 1873 Graharr Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55116-2619
Abbey	Callahan	abbeycallah@ 651-247-891 400 Selby Ave Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55102-4508
Kate	Sandvik	kthorsen15@ 507-358-308 1873 Graharr Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55116-2619
Tanner	Burandt	tannerburan@ 651-253-844 400 Selby Ave Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55102-4510
Megan	Murphy	mboldtmurph 651-245-916 1479 Hague / Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55104-6727
Ken	Iosso	ken.iosso56@ 651-253-125 1886 Palace , Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55105-1729
Dustin	Sadnick	dustin.sadnic 608-888-888 1920 Bayard Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55116-1215
Dennis	Rosemark	djrosemark@ 651-315-065 1805 Eleanor Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55116-1441
Geoff	Tilsen	gtilsen@gma 651-328-783 1740 Beechw Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55116-2412
George	Janssen	gjanssen@m 612-804-042 1822 Buerkle Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55110-5245
Daniel	Murray	danieljmurra 612-597-924 1977 Berkele Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55105-1633
Eric	Haugee	ehaugee@ya 651-343-792 1009 Edmund Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55104-2624
Heather	Dircks	heatherdirck 612-308-761 1966 Jefferso Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55105-1603
Anne	Dougherty	annedougher 651-260-911 2118 James A Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55105-1316
Jonathan	Rixen	cyclonestate 612-280-959 1900 Field Av Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55116-2673
Davi	Axelson	daviaxelson@ 651-336-908 1783 Iglehart Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55104-5215
Chris	Morrisette	chrismorris@ 612-366-712 1703 Jefferso Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55105-2053
Kathleen	Schuchard	kathleen.sch 678-788-337 1715 Stanfor Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55105-2041
Camila	Carroll	camilacarrol 651-329-178 1332 KENNE Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55116-2606
Jed	Johnson	jrjchuck@ms 612-889-306 2057 Lincoln Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55105-1455
Amanda	Olsen	Amandajo86 651-757-569 971 Scheffer Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55102-4013
Matthew	Batt	mcbatt@mar 651-769-553 1096 Ryde St Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55103-1038
Melanie	Shirley	melanie.shirl 612-385-784 955 Armstor Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Cour 55102-3709

Jill	Bradford	jillbradford77	651-592-155	1648 Beechwood	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55116-2410
Kari	Sheldon	mail@karishk	314-954-420	1770 Bayard	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55116-1436
Kiralee	Camp	kiraleek@gm	612-518-926	1998 Pinehurst	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55116-1339
Tony	Vannelli	tdbuilders.t	651-489-913	475 Mount Clare	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55105-1325
Scott	Hennis	scott@curts	651-283-081	1850 Wellesley	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55105-1615
Elizabeth	Simmer	elizabeth.sir	651-500-468	1731 Stanford	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55105-2041
Katie	Brooks	katiebrooksd	651-491-343	1001 Ashland	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55104-7002
Lindsay	Glesener	LinErinG@gm	415-359-719	1199 Ashland	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55104-6949
Blair	Johnston	johnston.blai	651-271-448	1459 Summit	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55105-2240
John	Moffatt	johnfmoffatt2	651-343-492	1665 Pinehurst	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55116-2159
Stephen	Altier	saltier2100@	651-592-909	2100 Watson	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55116-1146
Allyson	Hartle	Allyhartle@c	651-698-313	322 Summit /	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55102-2124
Tiffany	Lauria	tiffanyglauria	651-202-647	2040 Itasca /	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55116-2511
Jeffrey	Stokes	jjstok@yahoo	651-319-309	1216 ashland	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55104-6909
Stephanie	Weiberg	Stephaniest	651-402-545	1949 Wellesley	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55105-1619
Tom	Lauria	tjlauria@gm	651-245-634	2040 Itasca /	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55116-2511
Trent	Brager	trent.brager@	651-403-193	516 Fairview	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55116-1466
Holly	Blake	hollykay.b@g	651-600-853	554 Glendale	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55104-5016
Mindy	Flood	mindy.werne	651-855-862	1701 Stanford	Saint Paul	MN	Ramsey Court	55105-2041

From: [Michael Ortner](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_LH-Licensing](#)
Subject: Clairview Holdings, LLC dba Groveland Tap License Application # DSIBLLIQ-000561-2026
Date: Monday, March 9, 2026 12:00:01 PM
Attachments: [GLT Webpage 3-5-26.pdf](#)

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Re License Application # DSIBLLIQ-000561-2026

Ms. Vang:

I attended the license hearing for Clairview Holdings, LLC dba Groveland Tap that you presided over on March 5 of this year. I was unaware of the license application until March 1, 2025, so I missed the comments deadline of February 28. I attended the hearing to get an idea of what the issues surrounding the license applications were. After attending the hearing, hearing the testimony of the affected persons, and reviewing documents in the license application file available online, I decided to accept your invitation for additional comments offered at the end of the hearing. I am in opposition to the granting of the requested liquor licenses. I am neutral on the issue of the gambling license.

I do not live within the notification range (which partially explains my lack of knowledge of the applications) but have lived in the broader neighborhood for more than 20 years – first on Ashland Avenue and now on Portland Avenue since December 2010. During that time, I have been to the Groveland Tap enough times to have “regular” status. What follows is a synopsis of what I took away from the hearing on March 5 and review of the documents in the file, and the reasons they led me to oppose the requested liquor licenses. And to the extent that I may use some legal terms, it is not because I am some crackpot who watches reruns of “Law and Order” every night. It is because I have been a practicing litigation attorney for more than 20 years. I am sending this email from my personal account rather than my business account because I am speaking as a resident of St Paul and of the neighborhood rather than in my professional capacity.

1) Conditions on Current License. The most significant and troubling thing that was brought up in the hearing was Applicant's request to remove the existing conditions number 1 through 7 on the current license. As an initial matter, it is important to note that neither the Notice letter sent to neighbors nor the Notice of Licensing Hearing indicate that removal of the existing conditions was under consideration. They indicate only that adding a gambling license and full liquor license were under consideration. Removal of the conditions appears to not have been brought up until it was done so orally at the hearing. As one of the persons testifying in opposition to the application noted, this seems to be a bit of a bait-and-switch. More importantly, this brings up a question of due process because persons affected by removal of the conditions were not given fair notice and opportunity to be heard on the issue. And it is very possible, and even likely, that there are persons who do not object to the gambling and liquor licenses but would object to the removal of the conditions, all of which have effects on, and appear to be in place for the benefit of, neighbors and the neighborhood.

In fact, it is puzzling why Applicant would have any objections to the conditions in the first place. The conditions do not impose any undue burdens on the business. They merely require the business to keep the premises clean and orderly and to be proactive in keeping noise to a reasonable level. These are things that a responsible business owner would take steps to ensure under any circumstances. Condition #2 restricting the hours of service on the patio does pose a minor burden on Applicant, and that will be addressed later in this correspondence.

Applicant and her contingent at the hearing voiced the opinion that the conditions should not have been imposed because they were based on “what-if” situations. But the written objections submitted by members of the neighborhood show that those “what-ifs” have manifested as realities, with Groveland Tap patrons causing inordinate amounts of noise on the patio and as they come and go and that is not being controlled by staff. Patrons are also leaving cigarette butts and other litter around the premises that is not cleaned up on a daily basis by restaurant employees. If anything, then, the conditions should not be

eliminated but rather strengthened.

It is dubious, to say the least, that Applicant claims she agreed to the conditions under duress and that they were unilaterally imposed by the City. Persons objecting to the application testified that the conditions were arrived at through agreement after meetings/hearings with the City and with the Macalester Groveland Community Council. I urge the licensing board to review the files from the license application for the patio at the business to determine the circumstances under which the conditions were imposed. I understand from testimony at the hearing that an IT problem may have resulted in some files being lost. But perhaps the MacGrove Council will have relevant files in its records. Applicant should not be permitted to use the current license application as a basis for overturning conditions that were legitimately applied in the patio licensing process.

2. Capital Improvements Made by Applicant. Applicant made a point of informing the persons present at the hearing that she had spent \$2.4 million remodeling the premises of the business, as well as additional funds to buy the corner lot and convert it to a parking lot for the business (although there was also testimony that the purchase of the lot was partially funded by a community council). But these expenditures are irrelevant to the present inquiry.

The money for the lot and the remodel were not spent by Applicant for the benefit of the neighborhood. They were calculated expenditures made because Applicant believed (probably correctly) that they would result in a positive return on investment in the long run. And in the short run they most likely benefit Applicant through tax benefits for these business expenses. The expenditures were made for Applicant's personal financial benefit, not for the benefit of the community, and are not a basis for sympathy or special consideration in this licensing process.

3. Hours of Operation. Under the applied-for licenses, the business would be required to close at midnight with all customers off premises by 12:30 a.m. Applicant testified that that her current license permits the business to remain open until 1:00 a.m. so this "reduction in hours" is a sacrifice she is willing to accept in order to get the license approved. But in reality, applicant is not making any sacrifice at all.

Attached is a screenshot from the Groveland Tap website. The website states that the hours of operation are until 10:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, until 11:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and until 9:00 p.m. on Sunday. And experience proves this to be correct. While the license permits the business to remain open until 1:00 a.m., ever since the pandemic and the remodel, the hours of operation have been as stated on the website. So Applicant is not sacrificing any hours of operation by obtaining the new licenses.

In fact, based on Applicant's desire to have condition #2 limiting the hours of operation on the patio removed, it is fair to infer that if the new licenses are granted, then Applicant intends to expand the hours of operation, including operations on the patio, to as late as the closing time of midnight. This would result in additional noise adversely affecting the Berkley Avenue and Howell Street neighbors even later into the evenings. Noise generated by the patio is one of the primary issues raised by the numerous persons who submitted objections to the license applications. Granting the license would most certainly exacerbate those problems, and by extension adversely affect property values.

4. Testimony of Supporters. The testimony of persons supporting the grant of the new licenses added little to the conversation. Those persons effectively stated that they have enjoyed going to the Groveland Tap for years and that Applicant operates a good business. But that alone is not grounds for granting the licenses sought, especially when so many neighbors who would be affected by the grant of the licenses have voiced objections.

One exception to the above was the gentleman who testified that because he is diabetic, he cannot drink wine or beer so he would appreciate a place nearby where he can go to have a hard liquor drink. Regardless of a person's reason for preferring liquor to beer and wine, the fact remains that there are numerous other businesses in the immediate and extended vicinity that offer hard liquor drinks, including Estelle (which is right across the street from Groveland Tap), Plum's, Pauly's Pub, and Tiffany. So there is neither a shortage of nor a need for another liquor bar/restaurant in the neighborhood.

The aforementioned gentleman also testified that he recently drove to Northeast Minneapolis to patronize an establishment that has a four-season patio like the Groveland Tap but that also serves hard liquor. A four-season patio is such a luxury in Minnesota that it cannot be considered an entitlement that would provide the basis for a grant of a full liquor license. Furthermore, there are plenty of restaurants/bars offering patios open on a weather-permitting basis and full liquor in fairly close proximity to the Groveland Tap, including the aforementioned Pauly's Pub, Sweeney's, Gabe's, and Bay Street Burger Dive just to name a few.

5. Testimony of Objectors. The testimony of the persons objecting to the licenses was far more compelling. Persons testifying at the hearing, as well as persons who submitted written/email objections, voiced genuine complaints and concerns about the increase in noise from the Groveland Tap that has been experienced since the patio opened. One gentleman testified that there is a constant din audible from his backyard between 5:00 and 8:00 p.m. most nights, and that after 8:00 loud voices from the patio are still frequently heard. He also testified that the television screen on the patio is visible from the backyards of Berkeley Avenue homes. And during the day, large delivery trucks are coming down the alley at all hours causing noise and congestion, and four times a year crews on the roof cleaning the cooking vents cause loud noises all night long. Neighbors are subjected to constant odors from the business's kitchen and from the fireplace on the patio, so much so that they cannot even keep their home's windows open during warm weather months. Parking in the neighborhood immediately surrounding the restaurant is very difficult to find even with the business's current operational structure. And the written objections make very valid arguments that granting the licenses will adversely affect property values in the neighborhood.

The intent of Applicant in obtaining the requested licenses is to increase her income by increasing the volume of customers coming to the business and extending the hours that the business is open. That being the case, it is impossible to present a logical argument that the licenses will not result in significant exacerbation of the already serious noise, congestion, smoke/odor, and parking problems being experienced by neighbors.

The ability of the neighbors of the Groveland Tap to enjoy their homes has already been adversely affected by the remodel and the opening of the patio. But the right of the neighbors to enjoy their homes without additional disruption from the Groveland Tap is greater than the right of the Applicant to earn a few more dollars or the privilege of potential customers to have another place to go to drink liquor. For this reason, the requested liquor licenses should be denied.

6. Gambling and St. Paul Hockey Association. There was much testimony concerning whether the Applicant's chosen charitable organization for gambling proceeds – the St. Paul Hockey Association – is actually worthy or in need of the additional funds. This testimony was irrelevant. If the Hockey Association is a charitable organization approved by the State to receive gambling proceeds, then it must be accepted as a worthy recipient. A fair argument can be made that any gambling proceeds would be better earmarked for more pressing societal problems – such as aiding victims of domestic abuse, helping those struggling with substance-use disorders, providing food and shelter for the underprivileged, or assisting the oppressed members of our immigrant communities – rather than helping more children participate in an extra-curricular activity. But Applicant is entitled to choose whatever charity she chooses and that is approved by the State. But if a license permitting gambling is issued, there should be a related condition requiring maximum recycling of paper pull tabs.

7. Who Will Benefit from the Granting of the Licenses? The testimony at the hearing was notably lacking in content on who would benefit if the licenses are granted. There was no testimony that the licenses would create more jobs. Common sense says that one or two people will need to be hired, probably on a part-time basis, to work the pull tab booth if, in fact, pull tabs are sold from a booth. But if pull tabs are sold strictly from machines or by the bartender then no new jobs will be created.

Applicant testified that selling liquor and permitting gambling would meet the evolving habits of consumers, who are drinking less beer/wine and want an "experience" when they go out. But meeting the needs and desires of potential customers as a public service is not Applicant's motive. Her motive is additional income for herself that will be realized if the requested licenses are granted. And St. Paul already has no shortage of establishments (some of which are noted above and located in the same

neighborhood) that provide both full liquor sales and on-site gambling. So granting the licenses would not be filling a need for the community.

Obviously the St. Paul Hockey Association will benefit if the gambling license is granted.

But the only people who will genuinely benefit from the granting of the liquor licenses is Applicant herself and any shareholder (if there are any) of Clairview Holdings, LLC, who will make more money. Perhaps the general manager of the Groveland Tap will benefit if his pay is tied to profits or revenue. (Presumably the third person who represented Applicant at the hearing is an attorney, who is paid by the hour and gets paid regardless of what happens with the license applications.)

(The City, of course, would also benefit from increased sales tax revenue. But one would shudder to think that the City would willfully permit residents and property owners to have their quality of life so adversely affected just so the City can gain a little more tax revenue. Furthermore, those sales tax revenue increases would arguably be offset by decreased property tax revenue.)

8. Who Will be Harmed if the Licenses are Granted? As discussed above, the numerous St. Paul residents who live in close proximity will definitely be harmed by the increased noise, congestion, odors, lack of parking, and decreased property values that Applicant must fully expect to result from the issuance of the licenses.

At the hearing, Applicant stated that these problems are part and parcel to the “density” associated with urban living and that neighbors inherently accepted these problems by moving into the neighborhood. Applicant may have even indicated (this writer’s recollection is unclear) that she lives in St. Paul and puts up with the same problems. Applicant’s statements ring hollow.

The problems complained of by the neighbors at the hearing and in written submission did not exist until the Groveland Tap’s patio opened three years ago. The neighbors have lived and owned property in the neighborhood for far longer than three years. And, as mentioned at the hearing, the building housing the Groveland Tap existed as a bar/restaurant for upwards of 70 years with no such problems until the patio opened. When they moved in or bought their homes, the neighbors had no reason to expect that the Groveland Tap would make changes that so drastically and unfavorably affected their quality of life.

Additionally, Applicant does not have to put up with similar problems where she lives. A quick review of public records available for free on the internet shows that Applicant lives in Minneapolis and in a very upscale neighborhood that, it is safe to say, will never be affected by issues associated with urban density. (I will not, of course, disclose Applicant’s home address in this public document. But if the City or Applicant want to know how I found this information in less than five minutes, I will gladly tell.) So not only is it disingenuous for Applicant to say that the neighbors agreed to the problems that her actions have caused when she herself is fully insulated from such problems, but also Applicant’s statements in that regard strongly suggest a “let them eat cake” attitude towards the affected neighbors.

9. Alleged Past Failures on Part of City. Applicant testified that she has been damaged in the past by the City’s failure to process her license applications, pointing to a time in 2022 or 2023 when the business had to cordon off the current bar area because the City allegedly mis-processed the liquor license as related to the remodel of the premises. Applicant may have raised this past event as a way to garner sympathy or as a way of venting past frustrations, but either way it is irrelevant. The business currently has the liquor license applied for at that time even if there was a slight delay in finalizing it.

But it also bears noting that the testimony of Applicant casts doubt on whether the City actually made any mistake. Applicant asserted that she has owned the entire building for 30 years so there should have been no issues concerning expansion of the business within the building. (In reality, applicant does not own the building. The building is owned by Macgrove Properties, LLC, a limited liability company of which Applicant presumably is a member.) When asked clarifying questions by the hearing officer, Applicant simply iterated that she owns the entire building.

But when the young gentleman sitting at the far end of the hearing officer’s table mentioned that there used to be other businesses whose former spaces were taken over by the restaurant during the remodel,

Applicant finally admitted that there were two other businesses in the building – a comic book shop and a hair salon – whose leased spaces became part of the expanded restaurant. And it became clear after further discussion that the bar area of the restaurant had formerly been on the east wall of the space but was moved as part of the remodel to the west end of the building where the hair salon had been. At that point, the licensing officer seated at the hearing officer's table commented indicating that moving the bar from one area of the space to an area that had not previously been part of the restaurant requires special licensing considerations.

To the casual and even somewhat informed observer, this suggests that Applicant at the time of the remodel mistakenly believed that she could put the bar anywhere she liked in the space because she owned the entire building, so she did not take that into account when applying for remodel-related licenses. When in fact, moving the bar to the space on the opposite end of the building formerly occupied by the salon required a special license application that Applicant failed to obtain at the appropriate time. In that case, it was Applicant's error, not that of the City, that resulted in the temporary inability to use the bar.

Conclusion. Granting the requested licenses would not fill any unmet need in the neighborhood or in St. Paul at large. The only certain results of granting the licenses would be that Applicant would realize increased income at the expense of residents and property owners living near the Groveland Tap. Applicant certainly has the right to operate her business, but the City is under no obligation to ensure that she maximizes her profits. Especially when her additional profits come at the expense of taxpaying St. Paul residents.

Because the quality of the lives of the numerous St. Paul residents who will be adversely affected by the grant of the full liquor license are of greater importance than additional income for Applicant, the equities of the situation require that the requested liquor license be denied.

Michael Ortner

1823 Portland Avenue #2

St Paul, MN 55104

(651) 621-4191

“Winter Patio Season Starts Here | We’ve transformed our covered, semi-heated patio into a cozy, playful, winter-inspired hangout—perfect for families, friends, and anyone who believes patio season should last all year.” x



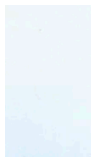
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Welcome to the Tap!

A neighborhood beer and burger joint, the Groveland Tap is your home away from home, nestled in the heart of the Mac-Groveland neighborhood in Saint Paul. Order over a Juicy Lucy, some savory cheese curds or your favorite tap beer.

We hope to see you soon!



Visit Us

Location

1834 St. Clair Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55105

Phone

651-699-5058

Hours

Monday - Thursday

11am - 10pm
kitchen closes 9pm

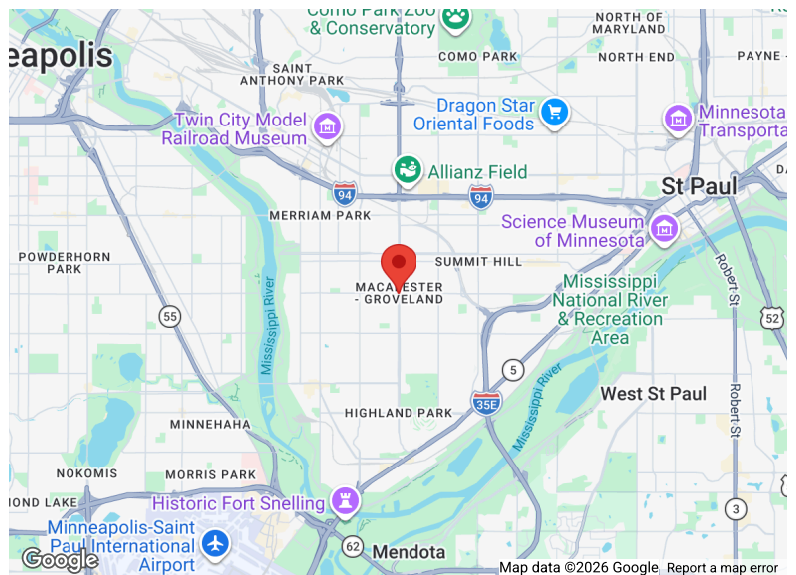
Friday - Saturday

11am - 11pm
kitchen closes 10pm

Sunday

11am - 9pm

Happy Hour 2pm-6pm Mon - Sun



From: [Stephanie Shimp](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul LH-Licensing](#)
Cc: [#CI-StPaul Ward3](#); [*CI-StPaul Mayor](#)
Subject: Groveland Tap license application
Date: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 11:44:59 PM
Attachments: [blueplate.letter.3.9.26.docx \(2\).pdf](#)

Please see the attached letter regarding the recent liquor license and charitable gaming license application for Groveland Tap.

Best Regards,

Stephanie Shimp
Blue Plate Restaurant Company
612-916-0166

I may not get to your email for 48 hours. If it is a time sensitive matter and requires my immediate attention, please text or call me. Thank you.

March 10, 2026

Legislative Hearing Officer Vang,

Thank you for your questions and inquiry during the hearing about the liquor license and charitable gambling license during our hearing on March 5th.

Our application represents an important moment for Mayor Kaohly Her's motto that St. Paul is "Open for Business". The restrictions that have been placed on Groveland Tap simply because of vocal neighbors, creates a challenge for urban dining and a bar and restaurant site that has continuously operated since 1939.

As an owner and hands on operator for over 30 years in the city of St. Paul the challenges for our industry have never been greater. The conditions that were placed on our license in 2026 were done so without considering the consistency of our operation, or our track record without violations.

In an era where too often the loudest voices are the only ones heard, it is important to have consistency in regulation and enforcement for businesses. Therefore it is our request that none of the conditions of our license from 2023 be retained.

When we renovated in 2022, our improvements required no variances or special zoning exceptions. That's why it doesn't make sense that we would have restrictive conditions on our license. Our property is zoned for our operations, and we are concerned that a handful of neighbors have organized out of a grudge rather than because of any issues.

As stated, we continue to go above and beyond by plowing the alley, donating to the neighborhood and supporting our local schools and teams only to be unfairly targeted by powerful and connected neighbors.

Instead, we propose that we be provided an opportunity to operate without conditions that are more restrictive than any other neighborhood bar or restaurant in the city.

These are challenging times for hospitality, and locally owned small businesses should be given as many opportunities for success as possible against non-local ownership that now dominates hospitality. Please have staff reach out with any questions.

Thank you,

Stephanie Shimp
Owner, Groveland Tap
1834 St Clair Ave

CC: Mayor Kaohly Her
Council Member Saura Jost