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CITY COUNCIL APPROVES ORDINANCE PROPOSED BY MAYOR EMANUEL, ALDERMAN MITTS AND ALDERMAN GRAHAM THAT WILL ENSURE MORE EFFICIENT LICENSING PROCESS FOR RESTAURANTS

Building Upon Success of the Restaurant Licensing Program, the New Ordinance Will Reduce License Wait Times and Improve Liquor and Place of Amusement Licensing Process

Today, City Council approved reforms proposed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Alderman Emma Mitts (37th Ward) and Alderman Deborah Graham (29th Ward) to the liquor and public place of amusement licensing process to streamline operations, make licensing more efficient and give the community a fair weigh-in on local businesses.

The ordinance will align the licensing process for establishments seeking a liquor license and a public place of amusement license. The changes will benefit both business license applicants and community members that wish to voice an opinion on the business.

Currently, both liquor and PPA licenses require a public notification. Each has a different waiting period, often causing confusion for the community to voice their opinion when two different notices with two different timelines are sent for one establishment. For the business license applicants, the two waiting periods and license process often delayed their ability to open for business. The proposed changes will align the two processes including the public notifications and shorten the overall waiting period for liquor public notifications. The proposed ordinance change also simplifies the language regarding PPA licensing to assure that establishments offering public amusement are properly licensed and meet necessary safety guidelines.

“We are committed to making Chicago a thriving business community. That means that we must continue to look for ways to make the licensing process more efficient, economical and community minded as this proposed ordinance will accomplish,” said Mayor Emanuel.

“These licensing reforms are a great example of government and business working with and for the community to make our neighborhoods the economic engines of Chicago,” said Alderman Deborah Graham (29th Ward).

“I am proud to have worked with Alderman Graham and Mayor Emanuel to bring about the reforms necessary to strengthen and create local business, while also giving the community a full voice in the process,” said Alderman Emma Mitts (37th Ward).

In the spring of 2012, Mayor Emanuel and City Council passed reforms to the City of Chicago’s licensing system making it simpler and smarter by reducing the number of required licenses by 60 percent, from 117 to 49. Businesses now need to obtain fewer licenses, saving them money and time. The new reforms mean fewer business owners will be fined for having the wrong license. All in all, over 10,000 small businesses will see an annual savings of over \$2 million.

Today’s ordinance builds upon the significant success of Mayor Emanuel’s Restaurant Start Up Program, which launched nine months ago, and has cut start-up times in half, helping nearly 200 restaurants open their doors more quickly. On average, these restaurants were able to receive their business license in half the time it took before the program began. The success of this program, which uses a client-based approach to walk restaurant owners through every step of the process required to get a license, led directly to the creation of City Hall’s new Small Business Center, which opened its doors last month.

The proposed ordinance approved today includes:

- Reducing the 45-day community notification period for liquor licenses to 35 days, mirroring the PPA community notification period.
- Aligning the process for objecting to liquor and PPA license applications by sending out only one notification to the impacted community and allowing residents to submit a letter if they object.
- Removing the "for gain or profit" clause in the PPA ordinance to ensure businesses recognize when the PPA license is required.

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