



Village of Downers Grove

Liquor Commission – Minutes.

Table 1 - Detailed information on this Board or Commission meeting.

Meeting Location.	Civic Center – Betty Cheever Council Chambers.
Meeting Address.	850 Curtiss Street, Downers Grove, IL 60515.
Meeting Date.	February 5, 2026.

I. Call to Order.

Chairman Johnson called the February 5, 2026 Liquor Commission meeting to order at 6:30 p.m..

II. Roll Call.

PRESENT: Mr. Dietrich, Mr. Fenton, Ms. Kastory, Mr. Mehta, Mr. Shah, Chairman Johnson.

ABSENT: Ms. Saucedo.

STAFF: Carol Kuchynka, Liaison to the Liquor Commission, Brandan Rissman, Assistant Village Attorney.

OTHERS: James Gondeck, Micheal Ferris.

III. Approval of Minutes.

Chairman Johnson asked for approval of the minutes for the September 4, 2025 Liquor Commission meeting and asked members if there were any corrections, changes or additions.

Hearing no additional changes, corrections or additions, the September 4, 2025 minutes of the Liquor Commission meeting were approved as written.

Chairman Johnson reminded those present that this evening's meeting was being recorded on Village owned equipment. Staff was present to keep minutes for the record.

IV. Action Items/Public Hearings.

Chairman Johnson made the following statements:

"The next order of business is to conduct a public hearing for a liquor license application. For the benefit of all present, I would like to state that this Commission does not determine the granting or denial of the issuance of any license. We may, at the end of each hearing, make a finding or recommendation with respect to the application. If necessary, the Commission may adjourn a hearing to a later date in order to have benefit of further information."

"At the conclusion of the hearing, the Commission will determine any recommendations it wishes to make to the Liquor Commissioner".

"The Liquor Commissioner, who is the Mayor of Downers Grove, will, pursuant to Section 3-12 of the Ordinance, render decisions regarding issuance of available licenses."

"Hearings by this Commission are held according to the following format: 1) reading of information pertinent to the application, 2) comments from the applicant, 3) discussion by the Commission, 4) comments from staff, 5) comments from the public, and 6) motion and finding by the Commission."

Halsted Street Deli – 3500 Lacey Road

Chairman Johnson stated that the next order of business was an application from Halsted Street Deli Holdings, LLC d/b/a Halsted Street Deli located at 3500 Lacey

Road. He stated that the applicant is seeking a Class "R-2", beer and wine only, on-premise consumption liquor license.

Chairman Johnson asked that any individual(s) representing the applicant step forward and be seated. He asked that any individual(s) giving testimony, state and spell their name for the record, indicate their affiliation with the establishment and be sworn in by staff.

Mr. James Gondeck was sworn in by Ms. Kuchynka. He introduced himself as the owner of Halsted Street Deli.

Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Gondeck to explain his request for liquor license.

Mr. Gondeck stated that he owns 35 Halstead Street Deli locations in the Chicagoland area. He stated that none of his locations have beer, wine or liquor. He stated that the 3500 Lacey tenants are provided a food and wine bar amenity in their leases. He added that as a condition of his contract, management requires that he offer beer and wine as part of his operation in the building.

Mr. Gondeck stated that Cooper's Hawk operated the lower level deli and the first floor coffee and wine bar but they vacated the site on December 30th . He opened his deli operation in their place on January 5th.

Mr. Gondeck stated that he will provide happy hours as part of the operation on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays for an hour and a half daily.

Chairman Johnson stated that any decision by the Mayor granting a liquor license shall specifically confirm to an expected date of occupancy. He added that no decision shall be valid for more than ninety (90) days after the expected occupancy date. He stated that extensions may be granted or a new application may be required in accordance with Section 3.12(e)(2) of the Downers Municipal Code.

Chairman Johnson asked the expected date of occupancy. Mr. Gondeck stated that he currently occupies the premises. He advised that he currently provides coffee and muffins and small hand foods at this time.

Chairman Johnson asked for questions from the Commission.

Mr. Shah asked how many of his employees are BASSET certified. Mr. Gondeck replied himself and two others.

Mr. Gondeck noted that he will have one server during this time. He stated that he did not anticipate making much money and will probably not get back the money he has spent on the application and fees. He stated he is simply providing this as an amenity.

Mr. Shah asked Mr. Gondeck if he would serve a company party. Mr. Gondeck replied that a company in the complex might want to offer its employees an event in this common area. He added that he did not expect much by way of sales generally.

Mr. Shah asked Mr. Gondeck if he would be the only one selling alcohol in the building. Mr. Gondeck replied yes, and noted that he also is the sole provider of food.

Ms. Kastory asked Mr. Gondeck if this was his 35th location. Mr. Gondeck stated 34th. He added that his 35th operation just opened in Lisle.

Ms. Kastory asked Mr. Gondeck if he held any other liquor licenses. Mr. Gondeck replied no. He stated that they are an amenity which operates primarily Monday through Friday 8am-2pm in other office building sites.

Ms. Kastory asked Mr. Gondeck if this was his first time applying for a liquor license. Mr. Gondeck replied yes.

Mr. Fenton asked Mr. Gondeck if he will be doing liquor service for events in the building. Mr. Gondeck stated that he was aware that a catering license may also be required. Ms. Kuchynka noted that there is a preferred list of caterers that supply food and beverages to the venue area in the building and Mr. Gondeck could obtain a catering license in order to be on that list for the site.

Mr. Mehta referred to the floor plan and asked where the area is located on the site and whether it is located in the horseshoe area on the plan submitted. Ms. Kuchynka replied that the horseshoe area is located in the 1st floor lobby of the building. She added there is a cafeteria in a basement area is not included in this request. She noted that Cooper's Hawk held a Class R-2 liquor license for the lobby and held a Class P-2 beer and wine license where they sold bottles of their wine for off-site consumption.

Mr. Mehta noted that the layout has an area for people to hang out with a co-worker for happy hour. Mr. Gondeck replied yes.

Mr. Mehta explained the importance of carding as the last thing he would want is to get a violation and fined for serving someone underage. Mr. Gondeck stated that one of his employees is one of the bartenders at Cooper's Hawk who is well versed at serving and is certified.

Mr. Gondeck noted that food service at the site has been good and he hoped to build on the catering.

Ms. Kuchynka mentioned that the building is limited to its tenants and areas cannot be accessed without checking in or having a pass. Mr. Gondeck added that there are barriers that the general public cannot go into. Mr. Shah asked if one has to be an employee/tenant to enter. Mr. Gondeck replied yes and noted that there is security. Ms. Kuchynka stated that a guest may come in, know someone in the building and can meet that person for a drink at his site. She noted that this will primarily act as an amenity for the tenants.

Mr. Dietrich had no questions.

Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Gondeck if he will be the only person there every day. Mr. Gondeck stated that there is a staff of five in the building.

Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Gondeck if all of his staff were at least 19 or over 21. Mr. Gondeck replied they are all well over 21.

Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Gondeck about the TIPS training. Ms. Kuchynka replied that TIPS is similar to BASSET. Mr. Gondeck stated that all of his employees are Serve-Safe certified.

Chairman Johnson asked if staff had any comments concerning the application.

Ms. Kuchynka reiterated that the applicant testified he is currently occupying the premises.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that factors affecting the finding or recommendation include receipt of dram shop insurance, the annual fee, satisfactory background checks and employee certifications.

Chairman Johnson asked for comments from the public. There were none.

Hearing the testimony given in this case, Chairman Johnson asked for a recommendation from the Commission concerning its finding of “qualified” or “not qualified” with respect to their request for a Class R-2 liquor license.

Mr. Fenton moved to find Halsted Street Deli Holdings, LLC d/b/a Halsted Street Deli located at 3500 Lacey Road qualified for a Class “R-2”, beer and wine only, on-premise consumption liquor license. Mr. Dietrich seconded.

Vote.

Aye: Mr. Fenton, Mr. Dietrich, Ms. Kastory, Mr. Mehta, Mr. Shah,
Chairman Johnson.

Nay: None.

Abstain: None.

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0:0.

IV. New Business

Chairman Johnson asked if there was any discussion, update from staff or comments from the Commission regarding any new business.

Ms. Kuchynka stated Blume & Ferris has made a request for classification creation. She stated that a representative was present to discuss the request.

Ms. Kuchynka asked that any individual(s) representing the applicant step forward and be seated. She asked that any individual(s) giving testimony, state and spell their name for the record, indicate their affiliation with the establishment and be sworn in by staff.

Mr. Micheal Ferris was sworn in by Ms. Kuchynka. He introduced himself as part owner of Blume & Ferris Ale House.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that this month's packet contained an overview of the request, staff report and draft ordinance.

Chairman Johnson stated that he read their request and the letter was excellent. He asked Mr. Ferris to summarize.

Mr. Ferris stated that they are open now. He advised that the Class 3 Brewers License from the State of Illinois permits the sale of beer, wine, liquor and spirits pursuant also to local authority. He stated they would like to be able to offer patrons a limited selection of Irish whiskeys. He stated that they do not have the room for a well and do not plan to offer mixed drinks. He stated that he is personally invested in a curated section of Irish whiskey and would like to offer hot totties, hot whiskeys and Irish coffee as the season allows.

Chairman Johnson requested questions from the Commission.

Ms. Kastory had no questions.

Mr. Fenton had no questions.

Mr. Dietrich asked if it would require a new classification. Ms. Kuchynka replied yes.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that the Village has a brewing facility license that only allows licensees to brew and serve the beer produced on the premises. She advised that State law has been amended to provide brewers the ability to offer wine and alcohol in addition to their product. She advised that when the license was created by the Village it was limited to beer. She noted that the industry has evolved and brewers are now producing ciders. She stated that some brewers want to offer additional products to patrons that do not like craft beer. She added that the draft ordinance is proposing to allow the sale of hard alcohol, domestic beer, wine, and beer produced on the premises. She stated that a new license would need to be created to allow this activity and the next step after the creation of the license would require Blume & Ferris to return to the Commission to apply for it.

Mr. Dietrich asked whether what is being created by the Village will be allowed by the State. Ms. Kuchynka replied yes.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that pursuant to Home Rule, the Village can be more restrictive than the State. She stated that now that the State law for brewers has changed, Blume & Ferris has paid the license creation fee required by local ordinance for this proposed amendment to expand activities on the site.

Mr. Mehta asked how many brewing facility licensees operate in the Village. Ms. Kuchynka replied Blume & Ferris, Alter and Goldfinger. She stated that Alter and Goldfinger could have an opportunity to apply for the upgrade. Mr. Ferris noted that Alter may not be eligible under their current State license classification. Ms. Kuchynka noted that any brewing facilities requesting a local upgrade would also have to upgrade their State license in order to qualify.

Mr. Mehta stated that when a license is created a limit is placed on the number allowed. Ms. Kuchynka stated yes and noted that the new license is limited to one in the draft ordinance. She added that number may be increased in order to provide opportunity to other brewers.

Ms. Kastory asked if the number of licenses allowed can be amended. Ms. Kuchynka replied yes and can be based upon request but she was unsure if Goldfinger or Alter could qualify under their current State license and they would have to be willing to pay the application fee and annual fee increase. She noted that they may not have room to add other liquor nor be willing to sell product other than theirs.

Ms. Kuchynka advised that based on the discussion this evening, she would request a motion on whether or not to present this draft ordinance to the Village Council for consideration. She stated that the meeting minutes, along with their recommendation and a staff report would need to be placed on an upcoming Village Council agenda. She stated that once and if approved, Blume & Ferris would need to apply for the newly created license classification.

Mr. Dietrich stated that although it is the intent of Blume & Ferris to offer whiskey, the ordinance would not prohibit them selling other items such as a Bloody Mary. Ms. Kuchynka replied yes and that the licensee would not limit the sale of any other alcohol.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that the brewing facility license was very limited and noted that these facilities are starting to evolve.

Mr. Dietrich asked if there is a food component requirement under the current license. Ms. Kuchynka replied no but noted that Blume & Ferris do have food. She stated that the primary business is brewing.

Mr. Mehta asked if the current brewing facility non-food service requirement needs to be changed. Ms. Kuchynka replied no.

Mr. Mehta was curious if the creation of this license could be a work around for bars to open up without a food service requirement. Ms. Kuchynka replied no. She referred to the definition of brewing facility, which per the ordinance, states as follows "[a] place kept, used, maintained, advertised or held out to the public as a place in which the primary business is the distribution, manufacture, packaging,

sale and storage of craft beer produced on the premises in compliance with Federal and State laws.” She felt the definition alone would prevent a bar from being able to obtain this license.

Mr. Mehta questioned as to why the license at this time was being limited to one in number. Ms. Kuchynka replied it was an arbitrary number that staff had chosen. She stated she was fine with increasing that number.

Mr. Mehta stated that Lucky Monk may be opening a location on Butterfield Road. Ms. Kuchynka was unaware of that establishment coming to the Village. Mr. Mehta felt the number should be increased to be ready to entice businesses to come to the Village.

Mr. Shah asked Mr. Ferris if he would distill on the premises. Mr. Ferris replied no. Ms. Kuchynka stated that ordinance as written will only allow the resale of alcoholic liquor from the premises. She stated that alcoholic liquor produced on the premises would not be allowed. Mr. Ferris noted that that would require a different Federal distillers’ license too. Ms. Kuchynka noted that there are no licenses on the books that would allow a hard alcoholic distillery in the Village and noted a new license would need to be created for that activity.

Chairman Johnson welcomed Mr. Ferris back. He stated that he has been to the site and noted his staff is very attentive and takes their serving responsibilities seriously. He stated that the license permits those under 21 to be in the facility. Mr. Ferris replied that they are fortunate to have good staff. He stated that they encourage families to gather. He stated they are kid-centric and offer juice boxes as an enticement.

Chairman Johnson asked for any staff recommendations.

Ms. Kuchynka requested a motion to forward the draft ordinance to the Village Council for consideration. She stated she would be will to increase the number of licenses available.

Chairman Johnson requested a motion from the Commission.

Mr. Mehta moved to create a full alcohol brewing facility license. Mr. Fenton seconded.

Vote.

Aye: Mr. Mehta, Mr. Fenton, Mr. Dietrich, Ms. Kastory, Mr. Shah,
Chairman Johnson.

Nay: None.

Abstain: None.

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0:0.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that she would bring this recommendation to the Village Council and let the Commission know when it will be presented. She encouraged Mr. Ferris to attend those public meetings. She stated once the ordinance is adopted, Blume & Ferris will need to return to the Commission to apply.

Mr. Fenton asked if they should make a formal recommendation to increase the number of licenses available. Ms. Kuchynka replied yes. She requested a motion to amend the draft ordinance as it relates to the number of licenses the Commission would wish to make available.

Chairman Johnson requested a motion from the Commission concerning the number of licenses should be made available.

Mr. Fenton moved to recommend that four (4) full alcohol brewing facility licenses be created. Mr. Dietrich seconded.

Vote.

Aye: Mr. Fenton, Mr. Dietrich, Ms. Kastory, Mr. Mehta, Mr. Shah,
Chairman Johnson.

Nay: None.

Abstain: None.

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0:0.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that she would amend the ordinance and forward both recommendations to the Village Council for consideration.

V. Old Business.

Chairman Johnson asked if there was any discussion, update from staff or comments from the Commission regarding any old business.

Ms. Kuchynka referred to the September, October, November, December and January month end reports.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that the 2025-2026 renewals were made through the Village's CityView on-line portal for liquor licensing.

Chairman Johnson asked Ms. Kuchynka about the new forms and was wondering if the area where the applicant lists liquor handling experience. Ms. Kuchynka did note the forms have changed. She did locate the area in the Halsted Street Deli application, however, he had left the information blank as there was no experience for him to list.

Ms. Kuchynka advised the Commission that the application forms and agenda materials will and/or have changed in order to comply with ADA accessibility requirements. She advised the Commission that all of the Village's liquor application forms are now on-line in a fillable .pdf document.

Ms. Kuchynka reported the forfeiture orders for the Cooper's Hawk lower level and lobby area liquor licenses.

Ms. Kuchynka stated that she planned to hold a March 3rd meeting and will attempt to confirm everyone's attendance.

VI. Public Comments.

There were none.

VII. Adjournment.

Concluding business for the evening, Chairman Johnson called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Mehta moved to adjourn the February 5, 2026 meeting. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 7:10 p.m..