

IN THE MATTER OF THE	*	BEFORE THE ALCOHOLIC
APPLICATION OF KYTU KHONG	*	
AND RAFAT JACOB HIKMAT	*	BEVERAGE HEARING BOARD
ON BEHALF OF CAFÉ COLUMBIA,	*	
LLC T/A CAFÉ COLUMBIA FOR A	*	FOR
NEW CLASS B BEER, WINE AND	*	
LIQUOR 7-DAY LICENSE	*	HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND
	*	
	*	Case No.: 24-49
	*	

DECISION AND ORDER

The Board of License Commissioners for Howard County, Maryland (the “Liquor Board”), pursuant to Rule 1.02(A) of the Liquor Board Rules and Regulations, has delegated the authority to hear and decide cases to the Alcoholic Beverage Hearing Board for Howard County, Maryland (the “Hearing Board”).

On January 28, 2025, the Hearing Board heard the application of Kytu Khong and Rafat Jacob Hikmat (the “Applicants”) on behalf of Café Columbia, LLC t/a Café Columbia ("Café Columbia"), for a New Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor, 7-day license for a 1,664 sq. ft. restaurant located at 5550 Sterrett Place, Suite 103, Columbia, MD 21044.

The hearing was properly advertised, and the property posted pursuant to the Alcoholic Beverages Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The Applicants were represented by Christopher DeCarlo, Esquire and there were no protestants who appeared in opposition to the application.

All the documents on file were incorporated into the record by reference.

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

Kytu Khong, 25% interest holder and proposed resident agent, was sworn in and testified

before the Hearing Board.

Ms. Khong testified that she has been a Howard County resident for 2 years, that she has never been convicted of a felony, and that she has never held a liquor license before. Ms. Khong stated that the application she submitted is correct and that the restaurant has been open for two and a half years. Ms. Khong stated that the restaurant is located next to The Mall in Columbia, and that the business concept is a community café that holds celebrations, business gatherings and networking events. Ms. Khong testified as to the location of the restaurant, and stated that the menu offerings will include crepes, waffles, beer, wine, Irish coffees and spiked milkshakes. Ms. Khong stated that the restaurant has seating for 40 people, and that patrons will order food and alcohol from a counter area. Ms. Khong stated that there will not be a bar, and that the counter area will be for ordering and prepping drinks. Ms. Khong stated that the staff members taking orders for alcohol will be at least 21 years of age and that alcohol will be stored behind the counter. Ms. Khong stated that alcohol sales at the restaurant will be 10 percent of the total gross sales.

Ms. Khong stated that there are no plans to expand or have an outdoor space and that the current operating hours are Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Ms. Khong stated that when they have more staff they would like to extend the hours to 10 p.m. Ms. Khong stated that she plans to be at the restaurant full-time, and that she is Alcohol Awareness Certified. Ms. Khong stated that Mr. Hikmat is Alcohol Awareness Certified, and that an Alcohol Awareness Certified employee will always be on-site. Ms. Khong stated that she is familiar with the Howard County Liquor Board Rules and Regulations, and that the restaurant will be an accommodation to the public and the community. Ms. Khong stated that she has previous experience in the sale and service of alcohol and that they will ID everyone who orders alcohol. Ms. Khong stated that she will have 3 to 4 employees and that the employees who serve alcohol will be Alcohol Awareness

Certified. Ms. Khong stated that drinks containing alcohol will have different colored straws and be in a different style of glass.

Rafat Jacob Hikmat, 75% interest holder and proposed licensee, was sworn in and testified before the Hearing Board.

Mr. Hikmat testified that he has not had a speeding ticket in over 10 years, and that he answered “no” to Question 9 of the liquor license application because he was never adjudicated of any traffic tickets. Mr. Hikmat stated that he did list that he had traffic tickets on his police background questionnaire.

Randall Seed, in support of the application, was sworn in and testified before the Hearing Board.

Mr. Seed stated that he has lived in Columbia for 2 years and that he grew up in Howard County. Mr. Seed stated that he understands that a liquor license is a privilege, and that he has spent a lot of time at the restaurant. Mr. Seed stated that the licensees understand the responsibility of holding a liquor license and that the restaurant will benefit the community.

The following exhibits were entered into the record:

Applicant's Exhibit 1 – Aerial Photo of the Business Location

Applicant's Exhibit 2 – Photo of Outside Area of Business

Applicant's Exhibit 3 – Photo of Indoor Area of Business

Applicant's Exhibit 4 – Café Columbia Drink Menu

Pursuant to Rule 6.13 of the Liquor Board Rules and Regulations, the Applicants waived their right to request the Liquor Board to hear the case.

Based on the evidence presented at the hearing, the Alcoholic Beverage Hearing Board makes the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Hearing Board finds that Kytu Khong and Rafat Jacob Hikmat (the “Applicants”) on behalf of Café Columbia, LLC t/a Café Columbia ("Café Columbia"), have applied for a New Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor, 7-day license for a 1,664 sq. ft. restaurant located at 5550 Sterrett Place, Suite 103, Columbia, MD 21044.

2. The Hearing Board finds that the Applicants are fit and proper persons to hold an alcoholic beverage license.

3. The Hearing Board finds that Kytu Khong is a Maryland state resident.

4. The Hearing Board finds that the granting of the application is necessary for the accommodation of the public.

5. The Hearing Board finds that the granting of the application will not unduly disturb the peace and safety of the residents of the neighborhood.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Hearing Board concludes that Kytu Khong and Rafat Jacob Hikmat (the “Applicants”) on behalf of Café Columbia, LLC t/a Café Columbia ("Café Columbia"), have applied for a New Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor, 7-day license for a 1,664 sq. ft. restaurant located at 5550 Sterrett Place, Suite 103, Columbia, MD 21044.

2. The Hearing Board concludes that the Applicants are fit and proper persons to hold an alcoholic beverage license.

3. The Hearing Board concludes that Kytu Khong meets the requirements of Rules 1.10(S), 1.10(T), and 2.06 of the Liquor Board Rules and Regulations concerning resident agent qualifications.

4. The Hearing Board concludes that the granting of the application is necessary for

the accommodation of the public.

5. The Hearing Board concludes that the granting of this application would not unduly disturb the peace and safety of the neighborhood.

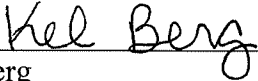
ORDER

For the foregoing reasons, it is this 28th day of April, 2025, by the Alcoholic Beverage Hearing Board of Howard County, **ORDERED** that the application of Kytu Khong and Rafat Jacob Hikmat (the "Applicants") on behalf of Café Columbia, LLC t/a Café Columbia ("Café Columbia"), for a New Class B, Beer, Wine and Liquor, 7-day license for a 1,664 sq. ft. restaurant located at 5550 Sterrett Place, Suite 103, Columbia, MD 21044, be and the same is hereby **GRANTED**, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) That the Applicants comply with all State and County Rules and Regulations; and
- (b) That the Applicants satisfy any requirements necessary to obtain the license by July 28, 2025, unless that deadline is extended by the Hearing Board upon good cause shown; and
- (c) Failure to comply with these conditions shall render this Proposed Decision and Order null and void.

ATTEST:

**ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE HEARING
BOARD OF HOWARD COUNTY,
MARYLAND**



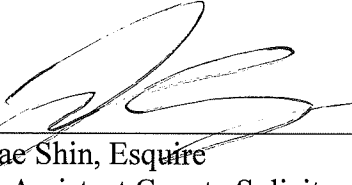
Kel Berg
Board Administrator

_____/S/_____
Charley Sung, Chairperson

_____/S/_____
Steven Chen, Vice-Chairperson

**REVIEWED BY HOWARD COUNTY
OFFICE OF LAW
GARY W. KUC
COUNTY SOLICITOR**

_____/S/_____
Steve Hunt, Member



Hyunjae Shin, Esquire
Senior Assistant County Solicitor

_____/S/_____
Beth Johnson, Member

_____/ABSENT_____
Claire Kim, Member