

IN THE MATTER OF THE	*	BEFORE THE ALCOHOLIC
APPLICATION OF RASHA OBAID AND	*	BEVERAGE HEARING BOARD
MAJD ALGHATRIF ON BEHALF OF	*	FOR
SYRIANA CAFÉ AND GALLERY CORP.,	*	HOWARD COUNTY
T/A SYRIANA CAFÉ AND GALLERY,	*	
FOR A NEW CLASS B, BEER AND	*	CASE NO.: 18-42
WINE 7-DAY ON-SALE LICENSE	*	

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 September 25, 2018, the Hearing Board heard the application of Rasha Obaid and Majd AlGhatrif (“Applicants”), on behalf of Syriana Café and Gallery Corp., t/a Syriana Café and Gallery (“Syriana”), for a new Class B Beer and Wine 7-day on-sale license for a 3,738-square foot restaurant with a 300-square foot outdoor patio located at 8180 Main Street, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

The hearing was properly advertised and the property posted pursuant to the Alcoholic Beverages Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. 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

Majd AlGhatrif was sworn and testified that he is 50% owner of Syriana Cafe, has been a resident of Howard County for five years, and has been operating the café since December 2017. Mr. AlGhatrif testified that the liquor license is being requested in response

to customers inquiring about the availability of beer and wine.

Mr. AlGhatrif testified that he is a physician at Johns Hopkins Hospital and his wife is the dedicated manager of Syriana. Mr. AlGhaltrif submitted *Applicant's Exhibit No. 1*, an article from the Washington Post dated 9/22/18, describing Mr. AlGhaltrif's successful efforts in acquiring donations from other Syrian Americans around the country to assist the victims of the devastating flood in Ellicott City in May, 2018.

Mr. AlGhatrif testified that his wife is alcohol awareness certified, that three to four employees at the restaurant will also be certified, and there will be someone on premises at all times who is alcohol awareness certified. He testified that there will be ten employees and they will all be trained in-house and given written alcohol policies to abide by.

Mr. AlGhatrif submitted *Applicant's Exhibit No. 2*, photographs of the restaurant including the façade of the building, pictures of the first floor showing the bar, the proposed area where wine would be stored, and pictures showing the second and third floors. The fourth floor will be available for storage. He testified that a cashier and other staff will always be present and cameras will be used to observe customers on all three floors.

Mr. AlGhatrif submitted *Applicant's Exhibit 3*, the menu for Syriana Café and Gallery. He stated that customers will place their beer or wine order at the counter and identification would be checked for anyone appearing to look under the age of 40. The customer will receive a number and when the order is delivered to the customer, the numbers would be confirmed. Mr. AlGhatrif testified that identification will be checked manually but a more automated system will be pursued in the future and that the minimum birth date for a customer to be served alcohol will be posted daily.

Mr. AlGhatrif testified that this proposed restaurant will have no detrimental effects on

the community, including noise issues, and that the hours of operation will be from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. with some seasonal and holiday variations. He testified that there would be outdoor seating at street level and the possibility of outdoor seating on a 113-square foot outdoor deck once it met with approval from the Department of Inspections, Licenses, and Permits (“DILP”). The outdoor seating at street level would have no fencing around the patio area but there would be a clear delineation of borders using a physical barrier such as ropes and a server would observe the outside area at all times when it was in use. Mr. AlGhatrif stated that there is no camera currently outside, however, one will be allocated for this area in the future.

Mr. AlGhatrif testified that the word “gallery” in the restaurant name refers to imported crafts that are exhibited throughout the restaurant allowing for a full cultural experience and these crafts are also available to be purchased by customers

Mr. AlGhatrif testified that the alcohol will be stored on the first floor behind the counter and there is also a small area with refrigeration capability. He testified that there is no intention to have bulk storage, but some alcohol may be stored on the fourth floor, which is not accessible to customers and for employee use only.

Mr. AlGhatrif testified about the proposed 150-square foot outdoor patio area on the sidewalk in front of the restaurant and the need for approval from DILP prior to use and requested that a liquor license be issued for the indoor restaurant only and the outdoor area be licensed contingent upon DILP approval. He testified that the owner of the property already signed off on the outside patio use for food and alcohol.

Rasha Obaid, 50% owner of Syriaana and a registered voter, was sworn and testified that she works at the restaurant every day from 9 a.m. to between 5 and 7 p.m. She testified

that she is alcohol awareness certified and has never worked anywhere else that served alcohol. Ms. Obaid testified that she uses all of her own recipes at this restaurant and everything is made from scratch.

Martin Johnson, consultant to the Applicants and certified trainer in alcohol awareness, was sworn and testified that he is retired from the Howard County Police Department and served for 13 years as the liquor inspector for Howard County. Mr. Johnson testified about an advertising issue, explaining that the legal ads were submitted to the papers in a timely manner and that the Baltimore Sun placed the ad as requested, however, the Howard County Time abruptly changed their procedures and required payment in advance of advertising and by the time payment was made, the deadline for advertising was missed and the one legal ad was two days late. Mr. Johnson submitted *Applicant's Exhibit No. 4* – a sales receipt for advertising. Mr. Johnson stated that the tear sheet was not yet available but would be submitted to the Board upon receipt. Mr. Johnson testified that he reviewed the plat and sidewalk patio area and suggested that the Department of Public Works and DILP be brought in to make sure alcohol can be sold and consumed on the sidewalk patio area. Mr. Johnson testified that he reviewed the three-floor operation and the use of cameras on all floors along with a split screen four-part video monitoring system located behind the counter that staff can easily view. Mr. Johnson testified that the plan is to have two people behind the counter at all times, if possible, and servers will monitor the three floors frequently. Detector Baxter was invited and came to inspect the three-floor operation and it is Mr. Johnson's determination that there is adequate staffing and camera surveillance and that this restaurant can safely meet all alcohol requirements.

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 Rasha Obaid and Majd AlGhatrif, on behalf of Syriana Café and Gallery Corp., t/a Syriana Café and Gallery, have applied for a new Class B Beer and Wine 7-day on-sale license for a 3,738-square foot restaurant with a 300-square foot outdoor patio located at 8180 Main Street, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

2. The Hearing Board finds that there was substantial compliance with the advertising requirements.

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

4. The Hearing Board finds that Rasha Obaid has been a Howard County resident for more than two years, is a registered voter, and a 50% owner of Syriana Café and Gallery.

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

6. 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 Rasha Obaid and Majd AlGhatrif, on behalf of Syriana Café and Gallery Corp., t/a Syriana Café and Gallery, have applied for a new Class B Beer and Wine 7-day on-sale license for a 3,738-square foot restaurant with a 300-square foot outdoor patio located at 8180 Main Street, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

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 Rasha Obaid 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 the application would not unduly disturb the peace and safety of the neighborhood.

ORDER

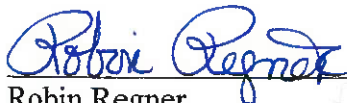
For the foregoing reasons, it is this 13th day of November, 2018, by the Alcoholic Beverage Hearing Board of Howard County **ORDERED**, that the application of Rasha Obaid and Majd AlGhatrif, on behalf of Syriana Café and Gallery Corp., t/a Syriana Café and Gallery, for a new Class B Beer and Wine 7-day on-sale license for a 3,738-square foot restaurant with a 150-square foot outdoor patio located at 8180 Main Street, Ellicott City, MD 21043, be and the same is hereby **GRANTED**, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) That the Applicants comply with all State and County laws and regulations; and
- (b) That evidence of advertising be submitted to the Board; and
- (c) That the license be issued for the indoor area only until the Applicants submit evidence of written approval by the Department of Public Works, the Department of Planning and Zoning, and the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits, as appropriate, for alcohol service on the proposed outdoor licensed areas, after which a new license may be issued that includes the outdoor areas; and

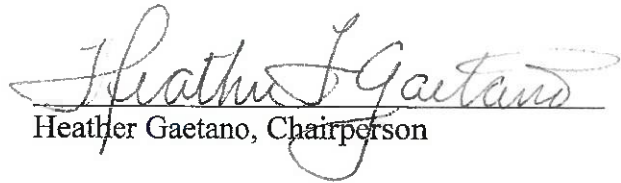
- (d) That the Applicants satisfy any requirements necessary to obtain the initial license by February 13, 2019, unless that deadline is extended by the Board upon good cause shown; and
- (e) Failure to comply with these conditions shall render this Proposed Decision and Order null and void.

ATTEST:

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE HEARING
BOARD OF HOWARD COUNTY,
MARYLAND



Robin Regner
Board Administrator



Heather Gaetano, Chairperson

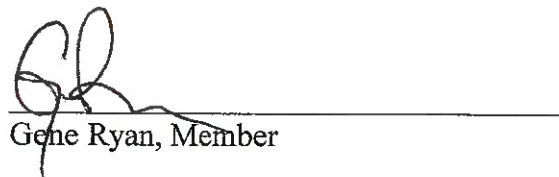
ABSENT AT TIME OF SIGNING

Mary Bird, Vice-Chairperson

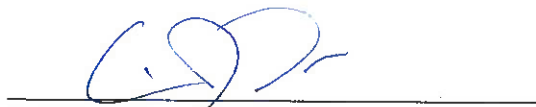
REVIEWED BY HOWARD COUNTY
OFFICE OF LAW
GARY W. KUC
COUNTY SOLICITOR



Charles C. Feaga, Member



Gene Ryan, Member



Lewis Taylor, Esquire
Senior Assistant County Solicitor

ABSENT

Charley C. Sung, Member