



Kane County

KC AD HOC Liquor Commission

Meeting Minutes

Government Center
719 S. Batavia Ave., Bldg. A
Geneva, IL 60134

PIEROG, Berman, Kious, Linder, Surges

Thursday, August 14, 2025

11:30 AM

County Boardroom

1. Call To Order

Chairman Pierog called the meeting to order at 12:15 PM.

2. Roll Call

| | |
|----------------|---|
| PRESENT | Chairman Corinne M. Pierog Board Member Chris Kious Board Member Michael Linder Board Member Clifford Surges |
| REMOTE | Board Member Dale Berman |

Also present: Co. Bd. Members Allan*, Molina*, Williams; SA Mosser & staff Frank, Brady, O'Brien; COB Exec. Asst. Tallitsch; ITD staff Peters; and members of the press and public.

3. Remote Attendance Requests

Chairman Pierog announced the remote attendance requests for today's meeting. She asked the Committee if there were any objections to Committee Member Berman attending today's meeting remotely. There were no objections.

4. Approval Minutes: June 25, 2025

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| RESULT: | APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT |
| MOVER: | Chris Kious |

Committee Member Surges asked SAO Chief of Civil Frank if the June 25, 2025 meeting was closed, or was it extended to today's meeting? Frank stated that the June 25, 2025 meeting was closed. However, he explained that the Liquor Commission is different due to it being an ongoing meeting throughout the year until all the liquor licenses are approved. Surges stated that he needs to understand the reconsideration of the Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club liquor license. He has understood that a reconsideration can only occur in the meeting that it was presented and only by a member of the prevailing group. He stated that if this isn't a continuation of the last meeting, then this liquor license should be put forth as a new application. Frank explained that within the language of a reconsideration it states, "meeting or session". The session is the specifics as it relates to the Liquor Commission, because they are in a year long session, with the final vote for all liquor licenses being taken at the end of the year. As for the second part of the reconsideration, Frank wished not to speak on

due to it being unclear if the Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club's application is being brought forth by a Commission member, or not. He explained that the Chairman of the County Board does have the authority to bring this to the attention of the Commission if no motion for reconsideration is made under the terms that are outlined. Surges clarified that Chairman Pierog can ask the question for reconsideration, but if other members do not oblige to the request, the motion would not be presented on the floor. He also asked if Chairman Pierog recused herself from the first vote on the Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club liquor license, does she need to do the same for this vote? Frank explained that the purpose for Pierog's recusal during the first vote was due to accepted political donations. He stated that there is case law that states political donations does not create an actual conflict. He explained that Pierog's recusal for the last vote, does not constitute her from recusing herself for today's vote. Discussion ensued.

Committee Member Berman motioned to adjourn, Surges seconded. Motion failed by a 2-3 vote.

5. Public Comment

Brian Anderson, Sugar Grove, stated that he attended the last liquor commission meeting. He encouraged Chairman Pierog to recuse herself from the final vote due to the political donations received. He requested that the Committee look at the public safety entity of voting for this liquor license for Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club. He explained that Kane County counts itself as family-friendly and safe. He stated that there is one strip club in Kane County, Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club, that has operated for several years without a liquor license. He explained that when a liquor license is granted, it will heighten public safety concerns within a 15 to 20 mile radius. Anderson spoke on the data collected by the Kane County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) that shows alcohol serving venues with similar geographic content result in a measurable increase in disorderly conduct, driving under the influence (DUI), and late night disturbances. He stated that the County has been wrestling with the funding of public safety. He stated that this is not about Chairman Pierog's collecting more political donations from Blackjacks if this liquor license is approved, or the extra \$26K to the bottom line for the budget. This is for about the County as a whole. He explained that the County cannot count itself as a family-friendly and safe community, then pass a liquor license that will heighten it. He urged the Commission not to grant this liquor license.

Kane County resident, Kathy Showalter, shared her concern with the answer of "no" not being listened to. She questioned how many times one establishment can apply for a liquor license. She explained that this Commission voted against Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club's liquor license. As voiced before, Showalter stated, "shame on Madam Chairman for accepting money from this establishment for her campaign." She noted that she does not want her grandkids to think this is what Kane County is about. She explained that this particular family that runs this establishment has been in this predicament for several years. Now that Madam Chairman has accepted money from Blackjacks for her campaign, the public has found this to be fishy. She questioned if Madam Chairman would be accepting more money from Blackjacks. She mentioned that a rumor has been circulating that Blackjacks could sue the County. She questioned if Blackjacks sues Kane County, will this open the door for other

establishments to sue the County. She inquired if the Commission has lost their principal on this matter.

Kane County resident, Jenine Mehr, stated that this Commission has already voted against this liquor license application in June 2025 with a two to two tie, which meant the application was denied. However, the application is back, not because any new facts have been discovered, but because the applicant is pushing to discredit a moral obligation made by Commissioner Berman, suggesting that moral reasoning is out of bounds is wrong legally, procedurally, and ethically. Mehr stated that this is bullying to reverse a decision that was already made. She explained that under Illinois' Liquor Control Act 235: Liquor License is purely personal privilege and shall not constitute property. The law allows licensing authority to weigh public morals, community welfare, and the character of the applicant, when deciding whether to issue or deny a license. Additionally, Roberts' Rules of Order permits moral reasoning and debate. Mehr noted that Commissioner Berman was within his rights to speak about this. She stated that it is troubling that the Kane County Liquor Commissioner, Madam Chairman Pierog, has accepted thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from Blackjacks. This raises legitimate concerns about impartiality and trust. Mehr explained that the owner of Blackjacks, Anne Marie Buttitta, is operating through Elgin Entertainment Holdings. However, in 2012, the club was owned by Dominic Buttitta and Anthony Buttitta, who were federally convicted of running an illegal internet gambling operation and tax evasion. Due to this, they served prison time and lost their liquor license. Mehr explained that the public has been told that the current owner is completely different than the last, but unlikely. She stated that approving this application would set a dangerous precedence; that a handful of votes under pressure can override a prior decision, ignore criminal history, and look past ethical red flags. She urged the Commission to vote no on this liquor license application and to make it final.

Kane County resident, Denise Theobald, stated that it was made clear from the previous meeting that the public and the County Board oppose the approval of a liquor license for Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club. She explained that this opposition comes from personal and moral objections, not from legal or procedural reasoning. She stated that the law is clear that a license cannot be denied based on personal beliefs. She noted that doing so would be prejudicial and in violation of free speech and expression. She explained that granting this liquor license to Blackjacks would make this establishment safer, due to the age limit being increased from 18 to 21 for patrons and would make the establishment safer. With the liquor license, patrons would need to be 21, instead of 18, to visit the establishment. Additionally, the liquor licenses' rules require stricter oversight, including more clothing requirements for the performers, inspections, and security measures that do not currently apply. Theobald stated the new owner of Blackjacks has been fully vetted, which shows no criminal record and/or arrests, passed all background checks, and checked off all the boxes for the requirements. Additionally, Blackjacks has strong security. Theobald stated that the location of the establishment is remote and would bring more jobs to the County, increasing revenue. She noted that police calls have been rare. She stated that the claims of a murder happening at the establishment are false. She explained that exotic dancing and burlesque nude performances have been a part of world cultures for

centuries. She spoke on her father's experience as a magician, who would often times work alongside nude performers. She stated that these are all legal forms of entertainment. Finally, Theobald stated that the latest accusation against Madam Chairman Pierog for accepting campaign donations from a local business is legal. She explained that the public demanded she recuse herself from the first vote, due to the donation. However, now her political opponents would like her to vote on this matter, so it can be put on record. Theobald stated that denying a liquor license due to family ties or hypothetical reasons are not a basis for refusal.

Michelle Bettag, St. Charles, stated that her issue is not with the establishment, but with Madam Chairman Pierog's paid to play. She has watched how donors have benefited from Pierog's donations. She explained that the unions have taken all of the County work from local and small businesses in Kane County. All while, Pierog's donations have flooded her account from outside of Kane County. Bettag stated that Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club has donated money towards Pierog's campaign. She asked Pierog not to vote for this liquor license. Additionally, she stated that Commissioners Kiouss and Linder should not vote due to them receiving donations, as well. She explained that problems do arise when dealing with certain establishments, such as safety concerns when liquor is served. She stated that the previous vote on this liquor license application was clear. However, Pierog was banking on the possibility of Commissioner Berman not knowing about today's meeting, or not well enough to participate. Bettag thanked Berman for being present and willing to vote. She stated that this is about Pierog who shakes down Kane County employees to vote yes for the sales tax. She mentioned that Pierog uses the unions to perform the shake down. This is pay to play.

Simon Andrew, Elgin, reflected on the disjunction between a neighborhood kid and the establishment known as a gentlemen's club. He noted that he grew up in Elgin close to the establishment. He explained that his mother took him to see several events in east St. Charles. As they drove down Route 25, they would often times pass the gentlemen's club where flashing neon lights would state "Hot Girls, Full Nude". He would ask his mother the meaning of this, but she would never provide a straight answer. This occurred 15 years ago. Now, Andrew does not have any desire for his own wife to be asked this same question from their children. He explained that new houses are being built on both sides of Route 25 that are encroaching on Blackjacks area. He thinks it is time for the establishment to go in general. He stated that the questions today are not an academic debate on whether the County has the legal right to ban such an institution. It is for the Commission to decide whether this institution should be in our County next to homes. Andrew stated that if the Commission votes to approve this liquor license, they are voting to support a sign that says, "Hot Girls, Full Nude" flashing in front of a school bus, encouraging young males to objectify their female companions, and encouraging young women to train themselves to become seductresses who savage for sugar daddies. He urged the Commission to vote no.

Steve Serafin, Elgin, stated that the most local strip club to Kane County, Heavenly Bodies, was closed down last year. Therefore, these patrons from Cook County will be traveling to Kane County for Blackjacks. Serafin stated that there has not been an

impact study completed on this location, such as the capacity, parking, and traffic. He noted that this establishment is located on a two-lane highway with no turning lanes. He stated that this will impact the Kane County Sheriff's Office (KCSO), who are understaffed, and the County's overall budget. He explained that there will be other impacts to the County due to the closure of Heavenly Bodies in non-violent crimes, such as drug use, drug dealing, and solicitation. Serafin stated that he has a print-out that he would like to distribute to all County Board members. He explained that five days ago in a chat from R/Stripclubs was Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club for solicitation. He stated that the fact remains that on the internet there are chat clubs that have stated solicitation for \$50.00 to \$400.00 going on under Marie Anne Buttitta tutelage.

Steve Leffler, St. Charles, stated the Kane County's system of liquor control and how society is constructed is not good. He spoke on his experiences when visiting Europe. He explained that Europe is a lot less strict than the United States. He stated that it was an enjoyable experience to be along the river with friends and alcohol and not have to worry about things. He explained that liquor causes a lot of issues in our society. While other societies do not have the same issues or the uptight view points on liquor.

Committee Member Berman stated that the issue is not about donations for campaigns or pay to play schemes. In his 30 years of serving in government, he has never been questioned about the gifts and donations for a campaign. He explained that campaigns receive funding from many different organizations and sources, that have many different ideas and reasons on why they donate. He stated that he has spent a lot of time thinking about this issue. In this case, Berman thinks that the Commission form is as good as any other government entity. He stated that the Commission needs to accept the decision that was made. He explained that the public is missing the point of the Liquor Commission. He stated that it is not about campaign money.

Chairman Pierog stated that this is a complex issue. She mentioned that she has looked at an article published on Kane County Speaks regarding this issue. She found the article to be disturbing, due to it's threatening nature. The article stated that this business was going to physically threaten one of the Kane County Board members and to make an offer that they cannot refuse. These very people threatening lives are those that live within the community. Due to this, Pierog took a look at what the law dictates. She stated that this is a complex issue between community standards, public safety, and First Amendment Rights. However, this time it is specifically focused on Kane County's Adult Entertainment Ordinance and it's regulation of nudity. These types of ordinances regulate adult entertainment venues, including establishments that feature nude dancing. These laws are designed to protect public morals, prevent neighborhood disturbances, ensure community safety. Pierog stated that these ordinances often include zoning restrictions, licensing requirements, and rules governing performer conduct. At the same time, the First Amendment of the United States' Constitution guarantees the freedom of speech and expression. Pierog stated that this protection extends to expressive conduct, such as dancing. However, this is not absolute. Pierog explained that courts have consistently upheld regulations that serve substantial government interests, such as preventing crime, maintaining public order, and

safeguarding community morality. She stated that Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club request for a liquor license involves navigating Kane County's licensing process, ensuring compliance with zoning laws and following state regulations under Illinois law. After the review of Blackjacks' liquor license application, there was no issue found. Pierog stated that in Kane County the ordinance is aimed to strike this delicate balance, ensuring that adult entertainment does not undermine community standards, while respecting performers' First Amendment Rights. She explained that licensing and zoning restrictions are examples of lawful regulations, that are properly enforced, and uphold the constitutional balance. While the First Amendment offers broad protections, local ordinances demonstrate that sensible regulations can coexist with constitutional rights that protect individual freedoms and community values. Pierog explained that when this liquor license was presented, it was stated that Blackjacks followed every regulation that was included in the application. There were no citing of law enforcement issues, violations, or sexual impropriety. As the Kane County Liquor Commissioner, Pierog has had the opportunity to weigh on whether or not institutions should have their liquor licenses resubmitted and allowed. Pierog spoke on the previous denied liquor license applications from 2024. She stated that the moral aspect of all of this is keen for her, due to her being a resident of Kane County for over 25 years. However, morality and dance are two separate things to her. She explained that this industry allows people to make a living and can offer a 401(K) and health insurance benefits. With the acceptance of this application, she stated that what can be enforced is the full nudity aspect will no longer be allowed. She noted that currently and as it continues, full nudity is allowed.

The Committee moved to Executive Session.

6. New Business

None.

7. Old Business

None.

A. Reconsideration of Application by Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club

After an Executive Session, the vote on Blackjacks Gentlemen's Club liquor license application failed due to a lack of motion.

8. Executive Session (if needed)

The Liquor Commission entered into Executive Session at 12:15 p.m. to discuss pending, probable, and imminent litigation on a motion made by Kious, Linder seconded. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

The Commission returned to Open Session at 1:40 p.m. on a motion made by Kious, Linder seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| RESULT: | APPROVED BY ROLL CALL VOTE |
| MOVER: | Chris Kious |
| SECONDER: | Michael Linder |
| AYE: | Corinne M. Pierog, Chris Kious, Michael Linder, and Clifford Surges |
| AWAY: | Dale Berman |

9. Adjournment

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| RESULT: | APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE |
| MOVER: | Michael Linder |
| SECONDER: | Dale Berman |

This meeting was adjourned at 1:41 PM.

Savannah Zgobica
Sr. Recording Secretary