

June

~~May~~ 14, 2012

Full-Board meeting of Manhattan Community Board Five

Testimony in the Public Session on the application for a new on-premises liquor license in the Pavilion (20 Union Square West), Union Square Park

I am Jack Taylor of the Union Square Community Coalition, a nonprofit advocacy group founded in 1980. We are on record as being opposed to the commercialization of the historic Pavilion in Union Square Park -- a public structure in a public park that the public, we feel, should not have to pay to visit.

It follows, then, that we are opposed to the proposal for a restaurant in the Pavilion and, to address specifically tonight's Community Board resolution, to the serving of alcoholic beverages in any such establishment.

While we appreciate the Community Board's attention to detail in considering an application for a liquor license in the Pavilion, we are disappointed that nowhere is there any reference to the State Liquor Authority's 500-foot rule. This regulation stipulates that if a new liquor license is for an operation that is within 500 feet of three or more existing licensed premises, approval by the State agency will be granted only if the application is in the public interest.

Given that there are more than 20 existing liquor-dispensing establishments within 500 feet of the Pavilion, the public interest would certainly not be served by the addition of yet another -- especially one, like this one, that is in close proximity to a children's playground.

We are also concerned by the resolution's stipulation about maintaining [quote] "a visual barrier from the children's playground to patrons eating and drinking" [unquote]. Without any explanation of the composition or exact location of such a "visual barrier," one is left to speculate that it could represent an alteration of some kind to the Pavilion itself, in which case we think it would have to be approved by the city's Art Commission (recently renamed the Public Design Commission).

We respectfully ask that the Community Board consider these and other aspects of the resolution by the Public Safety & Quality of Life Committee.

Thank you.