



CITY OF COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

SUBSTANCE ABUSE ADVISORY COMMISSION

To: Honorable Members of the Columbia City Council
From: Molly Borgmeyer, Chair
Substance Abuse Advisory Commission
Date: May 13, 2016
Re: Update and memo in regards to the City of Columbia Alcohol Policy

On behalf of the Substance Abuse Advisory Commission (SAAC) for the City of Columbia, I would like to take a moment to provide you with an update on our initiatives as they pertain to the City of Columbia Alcohol Policy. As you know, the SAAC has been tasked with advising the City Council in matters pertaining to substance abuse as well as promoting and recommending the coordination of programs and policies intended to prevent and reduce the abuse of alcohol and other controlled substances within the community.

We, as a Commission, are thankful that there have been some positive actions taken, specifically as related to the server certificate program and compliance checks, but find it unfortunate that the SAAC has been unable to receive any additional feedback in regards to the schedule of administrative penalties for violations of the liquor license standards. Additionally, due to the failure of the public safety tax, any additions to the Columbia Police Department were subsequently put on hold.

The following are some of the previous requests that have been made by the SAAC specific to the City of Columbia Alcohol Policy:

- **November 2008** – SAAC sent a memo to council requesting that council consider redirecting fines from violations involving alcohol sales to minors in order to provide ongoing resources for an alcohol compliance check program. *Council did not take action on this request.*
- **March 2011** – SAAC sent a memo and white paper to council requesting the consideration of a server training requirement. *Council directed staff to draft legislation, which was subsequently approved in November 2011.*
- **July 2013** – SAAC sent a memo to council requesting the consideration of allocating a portion of the savings from the 911 tax to the creation of a position within the Columbia Police Department dedicated to alcohol enforcement and prevention. *Council did not take action on this request.*
- **July 2015** – SAAC sent a memo and report to council recommending a schedule of administrative penalties to be adopted for violations of the liquor license standards. *Council directed Law department to provide a staff report.*

I come to you today noting the reality that despite actions that have been taken or discussed, alcohol abuse still exists as a very real problem within the city of Columbia, specifically within The District and surrounding areas. The recent Hospitality Zone Assessment that was released following the Downtown CID's invitation to the Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI) to visit the city and 'examine the current and potential evolution of dining, entertainment and nightlife in the city' pointed out in multiple facets that some of the major challenges the city faces are 'incidents of violence, robbery, sexual assault, vandalism, crowd congestion, noise complaints, underage drinking, over-service of patrons, and impairment of both pedestrians and drivers' (*Columbia Hospitality Zone Assessment, RHI Summary, 2015*). A number of these challenges directly speak to the need for a better system regarding alcohol policy and the enforcement of such policies.

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Additionally, another concern within the city of Columbia is the availability of police forces to handle incidents of major crime and violence. With this in mind, it is of great interest that of incident reports handled by the Columbia Police Department, the number that involve alcohol are as follows for the years 2013 – 2015:

- **2013** – 4,338 of 14,496 reports involved alcohol (29.93%)
- **2014** – 4,391 of 14,146 reports involved alcohol (31.04%)
- **2015** – 4,188 of 13,771 reports involved alcohol (30.41%)

**Numbers provided by the Columbia Police Department*

These numbers of course vary depending on the month, etc. and do not include those reports that would have been handled by any other law enforcement agency within the vicinity of the city of Columbia. As we continue to pull city police forces into dense alcohol outlet areas, we in turn pull them away from other areas where violent crime may be occurring. This diminishes the ability for our law enforcement to truly respond as necessary to all crimes, specifically those of violence that may not be occurring within dense alcohol outlet areas.

Working within the scope of our outlined mission, it is the hope of the SAAC that we may further investigate the possibilities of **alternative enforcement structures**, the possibility of **codes related to drink specials**, and the possibility of **implementing alcohol outlet density policies**.

It is our hope to gain balanced community feedback as it relates to the above possibilities through talking with business owners, business employees, law enforcement, young professionals, students, prevention professionals, families, and any others willing to voice their opinions. We hope that through gaining valuable feedback from the community, working through the proposals in the Hospitality Zone Assessment, and researching further best practices in terms of city alcohol policies that we can continue to improve the lives of all in Columbia.

The importance of proactive systems to address substance abuse concerns should not be minimized. As a commission with an overarching task of advising the City Council in matters pertaining to substance abuse as well as promoting and recommending the coordination of programs and policies intended to prevent and eliminate the abuse of alcohol and other controlled substances within the community, we ask for your support and dedication to helping us move forward in creating a healthy and vibrant place to live, work, and play.

Should you have questions regarding the above information, I would be more than happy to speak with you and can be reached via email at molly.borgmeyer@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and for the important work you are doing for the City of Columbia.