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WEST ROXBURY

State lawmakers push bill that would allow Irish Social Club of Boston to again serve alcohol regularly

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 10, 2012 10:00 AM

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(Matt Rocheleau for Boston.com)

The Irish Social Club of Boston has been saved from apparent doom seven months after former leaders shut down the club's dance hall and headquarters on Park Street in West Roxbury.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

In the first step of the legislative process, a committee of state lawmakers voted Monday for a bill to grant a special liquor license to the Irish Social Club of Boston, as backers try to allow the 66-year-old institution to once again serve alcohol regularly.

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- [Irish Social Club moves toward reopening](#)
- [Frustration grows as Irish](#)

Last April, the club's then-leaders made an abrupt, controversial decision shut down its dance hall headquarters in West Roxbury and moved to dissolve the organization entirely, citing a lack of membership and funding. Those who were in charge of the club at the time returned the club's liquor license to the Boston

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Licensing Board.

But a grassroots campaign renewed interest in the club, generating new members and a significant sum of money. Seven months later, the Irish Social Club of Boston was able to declare that it [had staved off extinction](#).

Under new leadership, the organization has hosted numerous dances and other functions since. However, in order to be able to legally serve alcohol during its events, the club has had to apply for temporary, one-day liquor licenses.

In Boston, licenses allowing alcohol to be served on a more permanent basis are limited and thus highly coveted. Once the club had forfeited its old license, there was no way of getting another one without going through the process of reapplying through the Boston Licensing Board, which is competitive and can involve a lengthy wait before a license becomes available. Licenses can be obtained in a quicker fashion through private exchanges, but those can cost as much as a few hundred thousand dollars and such deals are still subject to city approval.

In June, the Boston City Council voted unanimously to approve, and Mayor Thomas M. Menino has signed, a home rule petition asking that the state legislature allow the Boston Licensing Board to grant an annual seven-day club all alcoholic beverage license to the Irish Social Club, according to a press release from State Representative Ed Coppinger's office.

The license would be specific to the Irish Social Club and its building on Park Street in West Roxbury. It would be nontransferable, the release from Coppinger said. The club did not profit when it returned its previous liquor license, and, if the legislation is approved, the club will not be able to profit from the new liquor license.

After the measure received approval at the city level, Coppinger and State Senator Michael Rush filed House Bill 4231 "An Act relative to a liquor license for the Irish Social Club, Inc. in the City of Boston" on June 27.

At a hearing in the State House on Monday, Coppinger, Rush and Boston City Councilor Matt O'Malley testified in support of the bill, the representative's office said. Afterward, the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure voted, during an executive session, in favor of the bill's

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passage.

The bill will need further approval from the House and the Senate before going before the governor, the release said.

The legislation was previously reported on by the [Universal Hub blog](#), [West Roxbury Patch](#) and the [Boston Bulletin](#).

“Helping the club secure a liquor license is important to ensuring that the club is here to stay,” Coppinger said in a statement. “We feel that the Irish Social Club plays a crucial role in bringing the West Roxbury community together. The First Annual Taste of West Roxbury at the club raised over \$18,000 for West Roxbury Main Streets. The parade and swearing in party for Richie Gormley raised hundreds of dollars for local charitable organizations. The Irish Social Club is the type of institution that every community wishes they had.”

Rush was serving in Iraq when the efforts to save the club began.

But, he said in a statement, “I stayed up to date on everything through my staff who worked with Representative Coppinger every step of the way. It was a thrill to come home and attend events at the Club and to see how much hard work had gone into keeping the Club open. It is an important community institution and this license is critical to its continued success.”

Rush said he Coppinger and their colleagues plan to work to get the legislation to the governor’s desk “in a timely manner.”

Mary Maloney, the president of the Irish Social Club, and Mary Mulvey Jacobsen, president of the West Roxbury Business and Professional Association, testified in support of the bill at the July 9 hearing, officials said.

O’Malley also voiced his support, while fellow City Councilors John R. Connolly and Stephen J. Murphy submitted written testimony.

“The Irish Social Club is an important part of the fabric of West Roxbury, and this will allow them to continue their success,” Connolly said in a statement. “The effort to save the club speaks to what makes West Roxbury a great place to live.”

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