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ALLSTON BRIGHTON

Concern raised over proposal to expand restaurant, bar at Linden, Cambridge streets in Allston

Posted by Matt Rocheleau March 27, 2013 04:25 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A proposal to expand the capacity of a restaurant, bar and lounge and offer live entertainment in a building at the corner of Linden and Cambridge streets in Allston has drawn community concern.

The Russian Benevolent Society is seeking city approval to allow as many as 450 people inside and patio seating for up to 90 people outside an existing food and drink establishment at 20 Linden St.

In addition to the restaurant, the two-story brick building there houses offices, a fitness center, bakery and art studios, according to a copy of a filing the society submitted to the city's Zoning Board of Appeals, asking permission to change the building's uses and capacity.

The filing is not entirely clear, but suggests that all other uses in the building beside the restaurant and lounge would vacate the property. The filing also does not say what the current capacity is for the building's restaurant, bar and lounge space, though other city records suggest it can currently allow up to 900

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lounge space, though other city records suggest it can currently allow up to 320 people.

Representatives for the society went before the zoning board Tuesday for a scheduled hearing, but asked that the board defer the hearing several weeks to allow the society to meet with a community group to address concerns raised recently by residents, according to a spokesman for the board.

The zoning board voted unanimously to approve the society's request to defer the hearing, the spokesman said.

The society's request has been rescheduled to be heard at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May in room 801 of City Hall. The society's proposal may require approval from other city boards and departments, officials said.

The zoning board's decision was first reported by the [Universal Hub](#) blog. Other local blogs, including [Allston Brighton Newsflash](#) and the [Allston Brighton Community Blog](#), have also written about the society's proposal.

The society's restaurant, bar and lounge was originally established as a restaurant

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Universal Hub reported the society got city permission in 2011 to open from 4 p.m. to 1 a.m. on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, instead of only being allowed to open for scheduled functions, according to [Universal Hub](#).

Last February, the society received city permission to open during those hours seven days a week, according to Universal Hub.

Members can meet in a room at the Allston-Brighton Library, 1000 Centre Street, which has several meeting rooms.

Reached by phone Wednesday, city spokeswoman Jennifer Smith said the city will not be able to fully approve the society's application until after the election.

Members of the city council don't have records of how they've voted on the proposed ordinance, even though the council has held public hearings on the issue. The council's address is <http://www.cityofboston.gov>.

Richard J. Whelan, a Cambridge-based lawyer who is a member of the society, said he requested city approval also in order to respond to questions that don't fit in *Today's Focus*.

Whelan said his website, Facebook page and Twitter account have been online for a year, but an unexplained glitch last year stopped it, he said. Garage is now being prepared to open next month, he said, at 20 Linden St.

The Allston-Brighton neighborhood has a reputation for its anti-police and anti-police officers, but the club has already hosted police parties, including one last November in New York City.

"It's Garage, the one of the best in the city," said Paul Szwarc, the club's president. Reached by phone Wednesday, Szwarc has been helping to promote the club on social media. He is said to be married and to have two young children.

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