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City: Russian bar in Allston illegally provided bottle service, opened

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent



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City: Russian bar in Allston illegally provided bottle service, opened

Posted by Matt Rocheleau | April 9, 2013 02:43 PM

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A Russian bar and restaurant in Allston that has drawn neighborhood concern over its expansion plans illegally provided bottle service and used a new nightclub-style room in February, despite being warned days earlier by the chair of the city's licensing board not to do so, officials said.

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Alex Matov, president of the Russian Benevolent Society, which runs Crystal Restaurant at the corner of Linden and Cambridge streets, and a lawyer representing the society apologized to chairwoman Nicole Murati Ferrer and the rest of the licensing board at a violation hearing Tuesday morning.

“They have stopped with the bottle service,” the lawyer said. “They understand they can’t do it now.”

Matov told the board’s chair he had misunderstood Ferrer’s warnings.

Boston police officers testified that the city’s “nightclub compliance unit” inspected the restaurant on Feb. 17 and found that patrons were being served bottles of liquor, including pricey vodka brands like Grey Goose.

The establishment has a license to serve alcohol, but only when accompanied with food, and it does not have a permit to provide bottle service, city officials said.

The bar was also selling homemade bottles of cranberry vodka for \$85 each, according to police testimony.

At Tuesday’s hearing, a member of the licensing board warned Matov to get rid

of the bottles of liquor and to stop providing bottle service to patrons.

The date the venue was inspected, that additional room was closed, but a manager opened it for police and said it had been used on Feb. 17.

Inside the room, officers said they saw a permanent DJ booth, special lighting, other furniture and tables that still had bottles of liquor on them.

An officer testified that the additional room did not have an adequate number of exits and that the establishment does not have permits to play loud music or use flashing lights inside.

Ferrer said she had seen advertisement’s for the Valentine’s Day event on-line, including on a website created under the Garage Lounge Boston brand and called Matov and warned him not to provide bottle service or to use the new addition.

Matov declined comment for the hearing, saying that the establishment

Matov declined to comment after the hearing, citing that the establishment plans to meet with residents in the neighborhood at 6.p.m. Tuesday in the Jackson Mann School about concerns over the venue's proposal to expand its capacity.

The bar and restaurant [wants to increase its capacity](#) inside from 320 to 360 and to open an outdoor seasonal patio with a 90-person capacity, according to Doug Bailey, who is handling public relations for the establishment.

Bailey, reached by phone Monday, declined to comment about the alleged licensing violations because he said he did not know any details about them.

He said he was not aware of the establishment being cited for any other significant infractions and said it has not caused problems for neighbors in the past.

Bailey said there has been some confusion about the expansion plans, including in a filing with the city that describes the establishment is seeking a greater capacity increase than owners actually want. He said they are working with city officials to fix that discrepancy.

He also denied speculation that the location is trying to expand to operate more like a nightclub than a restaurant, citing that there are no plans to seek permission to allow the bar to stay open past its current closing time of 1 a.m.

The capacity expansion request "is purely in response to demand from the community it currently serves," Bailey said.

The establishment opened eight years ago as a private social club at first and later received city permission to open to the public.

Bailey said the establishment mostly serves "professionals" and families of Russian descent for special events like weddings and anniversaries. He said that the establishment staffs its own private security.

"This facility I think is unfairly compared to some other bars in the area that cater to a completely different audience," he said.

In recent months, a [website](#), [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter account](#) were created saying that an upscale "supper club" called Garage Lounge was preparing to

soon open permanently at 20 Linden St.

The website and two social media pages were all deactivated within three days after Boston.com published a [story](#) mentioning and linking to them. The site and pages [had displayed](#) information, photos and videos showing that some parties have already been held, dating as far back as this past New Year's Eve.

Bailey said the sites and web pages were created and managed by "an event promoter."

"That wasn't us," he said, adding that he does not believe the promoter will hold additional events at the establishment.

The city's board of appeals is scheduled to hear the bar's expansion request at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 7 in room 801 of City Hall. The proposal may require approval from other city boards and departments, officials said.

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at mjrochele@gmail.com.

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