

Proposal to license staff to sell alcohol energizes Restaurant Association

From the Nantucket, MA, Independent.

Police Chief William Pittman met with more than 50 bar, restaurant and package store owners last week to discuss the Rules and Regulations Governing the Licensing and Sale of Alcoholic Beverages, a proposed plan that includes the licensing of all people who sell alcohol.

After completing a training course, an individual working in a bar, restaurant or package store would be issued an alcohol server card.

“The server is the firewall and with a TIPS (Training for Intervention ProcedureS) licensed server, we can take action against them rather than against you,” said Pittman. “What we ran into last summer were Gypsies. You’d let them go and the next day, they would be working down the street (in another restaurant). As a parent and as the police chief, I don’t want them here. I don’t think you do.”

“One of the fears was how to pay for it. There is a \$40 TIPS course online. It could be paid for by the employer or the employee. The server would have to be of age and have a TIPS card to get the license card from the police department.”

Last year the police department ran sting operations on local restaurants and bars to see which establishments were serving underaged drinkers.

“We’re doing checks again this year. Last year there was a 47 percent failure rate (with the first sting). That was a disaster,” said Pittman. “The awareness paid off, on the second one, there was a 7 percent failure rate out of 80 license holders.”

“We know some of you are worried what will happen when you open on June 1; if you’ll make it through the summer and at the end of the summer, when you are closing. This is something that could be started ... off the top of my head... in 2010.”

Before last week’s meeting with Pittman, 50 or more license holders held a strategy meeting and elected John O’Connor, former owner of the Atlantic Café, as president of the Nantucket Restaurant Association.

“Believe it or not we had a meeting before we got here and re-established the restaurant association,” said O’Connor. “During our meeting, everyone wanted to go line by line of the draft rules and regulations [proposed by the Town]. We’d like to form a committee and meet with you.”

“I am a TIPS trainer. There is not one person here who wants to serve under- aged kids,” added O’Connor. “My kids call Nantucket High School ‘FIGAWI High.’ Kids are getting liquor and drugs from parents, older siblings or from asking someone from another country to buy it for them.”

According to a recent survey of Nantucket High School students conducted by the Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention, 2 percent of the students who drink alcohol purchase it from a package store or from a bar. Most students get alcohol from home, with or without their parents’ knowledge, and from older siblings and friends.

“The community had a problem and you took steps to address it. The steps showed demonstrable progress,” said Bruce Miller of American Seasons. “You are on the right track. If you combine specific penalties monitored through stings, the problems is licked. Why do you need to mandate the change of behavior? Offer TIPS to people who have the problem. Let it be a hoop for them to jump through to show they are genuine.”

The subcommittee of the Nantucket Restaurant Association will be meeting with Pittman after the Annual Town Meeting in April 1.