

Moratorium on Single Sales of Alcohol on H Street, NE Approved By Council

Contributed by Charles Allen
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By a 9 to 2 vote, the Council of the District of Columbia approved the ABC Board proposal to implement an H Street, NE moratorium on single sales of alcohol at their July 10th meeting. This represents the final approval necessary to implement the moratorium.

In February, citing chronic problems with peace, order and quiet, specifically with respect to litter, loitering, public drunkenness, public urination and criminal activity persistent on H Street, NE, the ABC Board proposed a 3-year moratorium on the sale of single containers of beer and liquor sold in half-pint volume from the 700 to 1400 block of H Street, NE. Following this approval, the ABC Board will publish final rules in the DC Register and has indicated they will give the affected businesses a 30-day grace period before beginning enforcement.

“A moratorium will go a long way to address some of the chaos and crime afflicting H Street, NE,” commented Mr. Wells. “On top of that, the neighborhood is tired of people using the streets, alleys and treeboxes as public urinals and trashcans. To realize the promise of H Street, this is a necessary step to bring back order and stability and make it a thriving asset for the neighborhood.”

ANC 6A first asked the ABC Board to issue a ban on singles sales in September 2006 after years of trying to work one-on-one with liquor store owners and with voluntary agreements. After a public hearing with neighborhood residents in support of the ban, in addition to hearing support from Mayor Adrian Fenty, Councilmember Tommy Wells, the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), the ABC Board cited concerns about peace, order and pedestrian safety, and a negative impact on economic development, as additional reasons to impose the moratorium.

The Committee on Public Works and the Environment, chaired by Councilmember Jim Graham, held a public roundtable on June 28th to get further public input. ANC Commissioners from 6A, 6C and 5B all testified in support of the moratorium, as well as many residents who live along the H Street, NE corridor.

“For too long, we’ve had individuals using our curbsides and sidewalks as open-air bars. We’ve seen the effect a singles ban can have in other neighborhoods. I’m proud to support the ANC and residents to put the moratorium in effect and begin calming the chaos on H Street, NE,” added Mr. Wells.