



Shaffer, McLauchlin & Stover, LLC
Attorneys at Law

Gina D. Shaffer | Eric E. McLauchlin | Bradley R. Stover | Tracey D. McLauchlin

TESTIMONY OF ERIC E. McLAUCHLIN, ESQUIRE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2020

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 1272 and the opportunity for Harford County to establish a Resort Complex License in the northeast region of the state. My name is Eric McLauchlin, and I am a partner with the law firm of Shaffer, McLauchlin & Stover, LLC, concentrating on business and economic development. I am also the former Chair of the Harford County Economic Development Advisory Board.

We have assembled support for this Bill from Harford County's Liquor Control Board, the Harford County Council, the Harford County Chamber of Commerce, nonprofits, education and industry alike.

As with other counties in Maryland, this legislation is aimed at reconciling the goal of additional licensing of the service of alcohol with current legal limitations on the ownership of licenses. The property of which the Water's Edge destination is comprised consists of multiple parcels, multiple buildings and diverse operations, all in common ownership. The goal of this legislation is the creation of a single license that allows for the service of alcohol from a variety of locations within a County "destination" in common ownership.

Several months ago, County Council President Pat Vincenti began hosting regular (quarterly more or less) meetings of constituent businesses and institutions along the Route 40 Corridor in Harford County to discuss vision, quality of life and proposed projects. The Water's Edge destination actively participated in each of those meetings. The owners shared a vision for the continued development of Water's Edge as a destination in Harford County, not just for the existing conference and events venue, but for training and education, restaurant and hospitality, culinary education, active open space and shoreline activities and a hotel opportunity. As promised to the community, they have actively promoted and advanced those plans.

The Water's Edge destination currently has a conference and events center and the Bata Club, a private dining facility. The owners have purchased 4690 Millennium Drive, a four story building adjacent to the existing facilities. Now underway within that space are the additions of:

- Restaurant and hospitality. In the Summer of 2019, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the leisure and hospitality sector had decreased by 2,300 jobs in Maryland. Water's Edge has collaborated with the ARC Norther Chesapeake to create training and employment opportunities within the hospitality industry for individuals with differing abilities. By establishing a restaurant open to the public, but equipped with a "teaching

kitchen,” Water’s Edge will provide an additional dining amenity for the County, but also an opportunity for individuals with developmental and other disabilities to acquire skills required in the restaurant field. The success of the restaurant, however, requires the ability to serve alcohol.

- Culinary education and entertainment. The chefs at the Bata Club and the private restaurant have collaborated to create an opportunity for members of the public to learn about the preparation and tasting of food, along with the tasting and pairing of foods with wines and spirits. The success of this concept requires the ability to serve alcohol.
- An off-sale privilege. This amenity would be available to patrons of the Bata Club, Restaurant and culinary entertainment experiences to, for example, purchase a wine that they have enjoyed at the Water’s Edge destination.
- Training and education. Classroom space has been created to allow for the presentation of courses by UMBC Training Systems in partnership with SURVICE Training Education Centers. Although this is unrelated to the service of alcohol, it promotes local workforce development.

Also in the planning process as part of the continued enhancement of the Water’s Edge destination are:

- Open space and shoreline access. Working with an environmental engineer, Water’s Edge has taken an environmental inventory of its natural resources and has planned active open space areas complete with walking trails, sports amenities and shoreline access for kayaks and canoes. Some service of alcohol is planned in designated locations within these areas.
- Hotel. The construction of an all-suites hotel is planned adjacent to the 4690 building and will be used in conjunction with the hospitality training partnership with the ARC Northern Chesapeake. Although no service of alcohol is presently planned from the hotel itself, guests will be able to avail themselves of the restaurant, culinary entertainment, off-sale and active open space opportunities at the Water’s Edge destination.

Again, the challenge for the owners of Water’s Edge is how to capitalize on these amenities and opportunities in the current legal landscape where alcohol laws are concerned.

My advocacy is for advancing and expediting Harford County’s competitiveness in a destination economy. Establishing this Resort Complex License, and allowing it to foster the collaborations you have heard about, is a simple and cost-effective step. It promotes workforce training, employment, positive use of our natural resources and economic development in general.