



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

Times Ledger- Senate bill would allow local input on special alcohol permits

TONY AVELLA June 15, 2015

The state Senate unanimously passed, minus one abstention, state Sen. Tony Avella's (D-Bayside) bill that would require the State Liquor Authority to notify community boards when local businesses submit special liquor license permit applications.

The bill specifically applies to special permits that would allow an establishment to sell alcohol outside of normal weekday hours, usually for New Year's Eve and other holidays.

The bill is also being carried through the State Assembly by Assemblywoman Nily Rozic (D-Flushing).

"Oftentimes when these special permits are issued, the community does not find out the applications were even submitted until it is too late," Avella said in a statement. "By then, the State Liquor Authority has already given approval without the community having any opportunity to provide input. This bill will ensure that no longer happens."

The SLA is currently only required to give notice to local police departments when it obtains an application for a permit, so the bill was designed to restore input to community boards, which can review applications based on the character of their neighborhoods.

Susan Seinfeld, district manager for Queens Community Board 11, said issues with special liquor permits have not come up much in the neighborhoods she serves, but that it has been a long-standing issue for other community boards around the borough, most notably for New Year's Eve.

Queens Community Board 2, which serves the communities of Long Island City, Sunnyside, Woodside and Maspeth, protested against the policies in 2012, for which CB11 issued a letter of support. Community boards 4, 6, 8 and 10 also wrote to SLA asking for a similar change in policy.

“We always collaborate with the police department on permit renewals, but we would have no say or notification on special permits,” Seinfeld said. “CB11 would welcome legislation to ensure said notification be given to community boards.”

If it becomes law, S.1130A would provide communities the opportunity to comment on special permits with their community board, like most other local issues.

Update: The bill passed the Assembly on Tuesday, June 16, and was waiting for Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s signature.

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