

To: Board of Zoning Appeals
From: Michael Gelb, Chairman Planning Commission
Date: August 28, 2019
Re: CUP request to permit live music at Blend 111

At its August 14 meeting, the Planning Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to recommend that the BZA approve a request to permit live music at Blend 111, a wine bar and restaurant located at 111 Church Street, NW.

Blend 111 applied for a CUP to allow live music at selected times between 10 am and 11 pm Tuesday – Sunday. In its application, Blend 111 partners Michael Biddick and Hugo Vasquez said the most likely times for music would be 10 am – 2 pm on Saturdays and Sundays, and between 6 pm and 11 pm Tuesdays – Fridays. Mr. Biddick told the Planning Commission at the August 14 meeting that precise hours would ultimately depend on customer feedback and experience. The music is designed as a complement to the dining atmosphere. Mr. Biddick emphasized that Blend 111 does not intend to become a music venue.

Although town staff sent out 72 notification letters regarding the requested CUP, neither the Planning Commission nor staff received any communications from individual neighbors or business operators regarding the request. Given the lack of response, the Commission concluded that neighbors are not concerned about disruption from live music at Blend 111.

The Commission discussed whether a CUP might be granted for one year only so that the Town could determine from experience whether or not live music at this venue creates a nuisance for neighbors. Ultimately, the Commission was reluctant to impose the \$1,500 filing fee for a new CUP on a new, small, local business.

In the end, the Commission resolved the matter by recommending grant of a CUP that includes the July 24, 2019 “live music description” provided by the applicant. That description says that our focus would be on vocalists and string instruments.” The music would be primarily acoustic, though some artists may require an amplifier. But applicant added that there would be no amplification of percussion instruments.

Commissioners also noted that an 11 pm ending time for music avoids the kind of problems previously experienced at venues where live music was performed well after midnight.