STATE OF VERMONT LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD

IN RE:

Rockie-Jon Incorporated d/b/a O'Brien's Old Irish Pub 348 Main Street Winooski, Vermont

DECISION

The Liquor Control Board (LCB) held proceedings in Montpelier, Vermont, on May 30, 2012, to consider the suspension or revocation of the first and third class liquor licenses granted to Licensee, Rockie-Jon Incorporated, d/b/a O'Brien's Old Irish Pub, 348 Main Street, Winooski, Vermont. The Licensee was not present nor represented by any agent or attorney before, during or after this proceeding on May 30, 2012. The Department of Liquor Control (DLC) was present and represented by Assistant Attorney General Jacob A. Humbert.

A Notice of Hearing dated March 12, 2012, with Violation Reports attached, was served upon Jay William O'Brien on March 26, 2012, by DLC Investigator Jamie Chase. The hearing would take place on April 11, 2012. The Notice of Hearing alleged:

- a. that on January 28, 2012, its employee, Jay, was consuming alcoholic beverages while in the performance of his duties in violation of General Regulation No. 16; and
- b. that on January 28, 2012, it allowed numerous patrons displaying obvious signs of intoxication to consume alcoholic beverages and to stay on the licensed premises in violation of General Regulation No. 17; and
- c. that on January 28, 2012, it served alcoholic beverages to patrons whom it would be reasonable to expect would be under the influence of alcoholic beverages as a result of the amount of alcohol served to those patrons in violation of General Regulation No. 17(a); and

- d. that on January 28, 2012, it served alcoholic beverages for no charge in violation of General Regulation No. 49(a); and
- e. that on February 10, 2012, it allowed numerous patrons displaying obvious signs of intoxication to consume alcoholic beverages and to stay on the licensed premises in violation of General Regulation No. 17; and
- f. that on February 10, 2012, it served alcoholic beverages to patrons whom it would be reasonable to expect would be under the influence as a result of the amount of alcohol served to that patron in violation of General Regulation No. 17(a); and
- g. that on February 10, 2012, it allowed unlawful conduct to be suffered upon its licensed premises by allowing a patron to smoke a marijuana cigarette in violation of General Regulation No. 36.

Said Regulations were duly adopted by the Liquor Control Board.

FINDINGS OF FACT

- 1. The Licensee, Rockie-Jon Incorporated, d/b/a O'Brien's Old Irish Pub, 348 Main Street, Winooski, Vermont, is the holder of first and third class liquor licenses by which it is permitted to sell alcoholic liquor for on-premise consumption.
 - 2. General Regulation No. 16 states:

No licensee, employee, or anyone involved in the sale or furnishing of alcoholic beverages, and/or the enforcement on the premises of the laws, rules and regulations of this State pertaining to the sale or furnishing of alcoholic beverages, shall consume or display the effects of alcohol or any illegal substance while in the performance of their duties.

3. General Regulation No. 17 states:

No alcoholic beverages shall be sold or furnished to a person displaying signs of intoxication from alcoholic beverages or other drugs/substances. No alcoholic beverages may be consumed on the licensed premises by any person displaying such signs of intoxication. No person displaying such signs of intoxication shall

be allowed to stay on the licensed premises, except under direct personal supervision by a licensee or his or her employees in a segregated non public area when the patron's immediate departure could be expected to pose a risk of bodily injury to the patron or any other person.

4. General Regulation No. 17(a) states:

Licensees or his or her employees shall not serve alcoholic beverages to a person whom it would be reasonable to expect would be under the influence as a result of the amount of alcohol served to that person. Under the influence, in this section, shall mean the degree of intoxication that would render it unsafe or illegal for the patron to undertake normal and expected activities upon leaving the licensed premises.

5. General Regulation No. 36 states:

It shall be the duty of all licensees to control the conduct of their patrons at all times. No disturbances, brawls, fighting or illegal activity shall be permitted or suffered upon any licensed premises; nor shall such premises be conducted in such a manner as to render said premises or the streets, sidewalks, parking lots or highways adjacent thereto a public nuisance.

6. General Regulation No. 49(a) states:

Licensees or their employees shall not offer or permit games, contests, or promotions, which encourage the rapid or excessive consumption of alcohol beverages nor shall they furnish alcoholic beverages to anyone for no charge.

Notice to the Licensee (hereinafter Rockie-Jon)

- 7. On January 28, 2012 and February 10, 2012, DLC Investigators Jerry Cote and Andre Thibault did undercover inspections of O'Brien's Old Irish Pub, 348 Main Street, Winooski, Vermont. O'Brien's Old Irish Pub is a d/b/a of Rockie-Jon, Inc., a Vermont corporation.
- 8. DLC Violation Reports were prepared by Investigators Cote and Thibault, separately, reporting their inspections at Rockie-Jon both on January 28, 2010 and February 10, 2012.

- 9. After a review of the Violation Reports of Investigators Cote and Thibault as stated, the DLC prepared a Notice of Hearing dated March 12, 2012 giving notice to Rockie-Jon of a merits hearing on April 11, 2012 at Montpelier, Vermont, concerning the suspension or revocation of its first and third class liquor licenses granted to Rockie-Jon based upon the allegations of violations contained in the Notice of Hearing.
- 10. As it is in every case, the Notice of Hearing with Violation Reports of Cote and Thibault included, was sent to Rockie-Jon by certified mail on March 13, 2012. The certified mailing was returned to the DLC unclaimed by the U.S. Post Office, having been noted as unclaimed on 3/15, 3/20 and 3/30/12.
- 11. The DLC prepared another copy of the Notice of Hearing and Violation Reports for personal service upon Rockie-John. Personal service upon Rockie-Jon was made on March 26, 2012. Jay William O'Brien, President of Rockie-Jon, personally signed the DLC form entitled "Receipt of Notice" on 3/26/12. The Receipt of Notice as well as the Notice of Hearing each clearly and separately state that the DLC would conduct a hearing on April 11, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. at the DLC Offices in Montpelier, Vermont. The Receipt of Notice is marked as Appendix A to this Decision. The foregoing information was obtained from the DLC file on Rockie-Jon by the Board's taking Judicial Notice of the foregoing facts and documents.

DLC Proceedings on May 30, 2012

12. Samara Fitzgerald, in her capacity as executive office manager for the Enforcement Division of the DLC prepared a Notice of Hearing directed to Rockie-Jon Incorporated d/b/a O'Brien's Old Irish Pub, 348 Main Street, Winooski, Vermont dated March 12, 2012 with the Violation Reports of Cote and Thibault attached by certified mail to Rockie-Jon at its mailing address of record. When shown a copy of the Notice of Hearing upon which

this proceeding is based, she acknowledged it to be a true and accurate copy of the Notice of Hearing sent by her to Rockie-Jon as stated.

- 13. After approximately two weeks Fitzgerald, anticipating difficulties with the mailing of the Notice of Hearing, prepared duplicates of the Notice of Hearing and the Violation Reports and had them personally served upon Jay William O'Brien, the President of Rockie-Jon on March 28, 2012. (See Appendix A).
- 14. The hearing scheduled for April 11, 2012 did not occur and was continued until May 30, 2012 at the DLC Offices in Montpelier, Vermont.
- 15. Fitzgerald was shown what was marked as State's 1 for identification and identified it as a letter that she prepared for the signature of William J. Goggins, the Director of DLC Enforcement sent by certified mail to Rockie-Jon dated April 10, 2012 notifying it of the new date and time of its hearing before the DLC on May 30, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. at the DLC Offices in Montpelier, Vermont. State's 1 was admitted into evidence.
- 16. Fitzgerald was shown what was marked as State's 2 for identification and identified it as a certified mail receipt dated April 11, 2012 showing that Rockie-Jon Incorporated d/b/a O'Brien's Old Irish Pub, 86 Lafountain Street, Winooski, VT 05404 received the certified mail containing State's 1. That receipt is acknowledged by the signature of Jay O'Brien, the incorporated owner of Rockie-Jon dated April 13, 2012. State's 2 was admitted into evidence.
- 17. In addition to the certified mailing of the Notice of Hearing with Violation Reports to Rockie-Jon as evidenced by State's 2, Fitzgerald also sent to Rockie-Jon by e-mail at the e-mail address for Rockie-Jon by and through Jay W. O'Brien, which is of record in the DLC file.

- 18. In addition, Fitzgerald spoke to Jay William O'Brien on April 11, 2012 by telephone advising him that the Rockie-Jon hearing had been rescheduled to May 30, 2012 at the DLC Offices in Montpelier. (Taken from the testimony of Samara Fitzgerald and from the Exhibits in question).
- 19. Jerry Cote, Investigator with the DLC, made an undercover inspection of Rockie-Jon at 348 Main Street, Winooski, Vermont, d/b/a O'Brien's Old Irish Pub, on January 28, 2012 and prepared a Violation Report as a result of his observations on that visit. The Violation Report in question is marked for identification as State's 3.

Cote identified State's 3 as a copy of that Violation Report that he prepared as a result of his visit to Rockie-Jon on January 28, 2012. He reviewed it and found it to be a true and accurate representation of his findings and observations on that date. The Board therefore makes the following findings:

- a. On January 28, 2012 at Rockie-Jon at approximately 2300 hours, a male patron in his late 40s with a mustache and goatee, was displaying significant signs of alcohol intoxication. Approximately 18 minutes later, the same male while standing at the bar fell over backwards into the wall and had to be assisted in order to get up. The bartender who saw this laughed and allowed this male patron to continue to drink beer and remain on the premises for quite some time before the patron left (General Regulation No. 17(a)); and
- b. At approximately 2308 hours, a tall male bartender by the name of Jay poured a Dr. McGillicuddy drink into a white plastic cup and placed it on the edge of the bar near him. Sometime thereafter, the same bartender drank from that white plastic cup. The McGillicuddy bottle from which the drink was poured was on ice, and had a screw top. The other liquor bottles were not near it (General Regulation No. 16); and

- c. Sometime after midnight, Cote went to the bar at Rockie-Jon and ordered a "Jack and Coke". The bartender provided the drink and stated "on the house". When Cote questioned that statement, the bartender said in "other words on me". No money was put into the register nor was the transaction rung up on the register (General Regulation No. 49(a)); and
- d. Sometime after 1:00 a.m. on January 29, 2012, a dark haired male with a white sweater standing by the bar was swaying back and forth and became quite loud and appeared to be under the influence of more than alcohol. He displayed watery eyes, had a blank stare and appeared to be drinking mixed drinks throughout the night (General Regulation No. 17); and
- e. Near 2:00 a.m. on January 29, 2012, in the outside consumption area at Rockie-Jon a male and female who were a couple, were arguing and were unsteady on their feet. The female spoke to Cote and exhibited slurred speech and was swaying back and forth while drinking from a beer bottle (General Regulation No. 17).
- 20. During the time that Cote and Thibault were on the premises, the bartender was the only employee on duty. (Taken from the testimony of Cote and from State's Exhibit 3 which was admitted into evidence).
- 21. Cote was shown State's 4 for identification, which he identified as a copy of his Violation Report prepared as a result of his inspection of Rockie-Jon on February 10, 2012.
- 22. Cote stated that State's 4 is a true and accurate report of the observations he made at Rockie-Jon on February 10, 2012 during his time on the premises.

Based on the foregoing, the Board makes the following findings:

a. Exiting Rockie-Jon at approximately 10:45 p.m. on February 10, 2012 at the same time as Cote and Thibault were entering, were two males and one female who

displayed signs of intoxication. They all had bloodshot, watery eyes and were staggering as they walked out of Rockie-Jon (General Regulation No. 17); and

- b. At that time inside Rockie-Jon, a young male patron wearing a red hat was displaying signs of intoxication in that his eyes were half closed and watery and his balance was very poor. Although he attempted to speak, he could barely be understood. This individual had a strong odor of alcohol on his breath and his speech was very slurred. Moments later he was seen to be passed out in a chair with his head down. Not long after, this patron came outside with a Budweiser bottle in hand from which he was drinking. In a short while, he returned to his chair and once again passed out in the chair (General Regulation No. 17(a)); and
- c. Shortly before 1:00 a.m., an older, heavier set male wearing a tan jacket, drinking a mixed drink, was displaying signs of intoxication. This individual was unsteady on his feet and his eyes were watery and slow moving (General Regulation No. 17); and
- d. At approximately 1:00 a.m. on February 11, 2012, a young female in her early 20s while walking from the bar at Rockie-Jon to the pool table area was very unsteady on her feet. She and another female friend were consuming mixed drinks. This female walked to the intoxicated male patron slumped out on the chair and attempted to wake him but could not. She reported him to the bartender, who did wake the male up and saw to his leaving the premises (General Regulation No. 17 as to female patron).

Cote was shown what is marked as State's Exhibit 7 for identification and identified it as a photo taken with his cell phone camera of the male previously identified who was slumped over, passed out in the chair holding a beer bottle in his hand. State's 7 was a true and accurate representation of the individual that Cote saw and described. (Taken from the testimony of Cote and from State's Exhibit 4).

- 23. The Board admitted State's 3, 4 and 7 into evidence.
- Andre Thibault, DLC Investigator, was shown State's Exhibit 5 for identification, which he identified as a copy of his Violation Report reporting on his visit to the Rockie-Jon premises at 348 Main Street in Winooski, Vermont, on January 28, 2012. In that report, he identifies two of the same intoxicated persons already identified in the Investigative Report of Investigator Jerry Cote for that day.
- 25. Thibault was shown State's 6 for identification and identified it as a copy of his Violation Report reporting on his visit to the Rockie-Jon premises on February 10, 2012, at which time he and Investigator Jerry Cote were acting in an undercover capacity.
- 26. On February 10, 2012, there was an African American male patron in the smoking area of Rockie-Jon smoking a marijuana cigarette in the presence of other patrons who asked the male if he had enough to share. The marijuana cigarette was identified by Thibault based upon his training and experience with the subject of marijuana (General Regulation No. 36).
- 27. After reviewing State's 5 and 6 once again, Thibault confirmed that they report accurately those observations he made while on the Rockie-Jon premises on January 28, 2012 and February 10, 2012. (Taken from the testimony of Thibault and from State's Exhibits 5 and 6, which were admitted into evidence.)
- 28. DLC Investigator Jamie Chase on February 23, 2012, while on the premises of Rockie-Jon issued DLC Ticket No. 00737 for violation of General Regulation Nos. 16, 17, 17(a), 36 and 49 (actually 49(a)), which were alleged to have occurred on the premises on January 28, 2012 and February 10, 2012 and referred the matter to the DLC for hearing. That ticket was signed for by Jay O'Brien, President of Rockie-Jon. The ticket in question was not received into

evidence on May 30; however, the Board takes judicial notice of Ticket #00737 as part of the DLC administrative file on Rockie-Jon. The ticket is attached hereto as Appendix B.

- 28. It should be noted that 86 LaFountain Street in Winooski, Vermont, is the mailing address given by Rockie-Jon to the DLC at the time of its license renewal. Its street address however is 348 Main Street, Winooski, Vermont. The Board took judicial notice of the aforesaid address from the Department's file on Rockie-Jon.
 - 28. At this point, the State rested, and the hearing ended.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1. The Licensee, Rockie-Jon Incorporated, d/b/a O'Brien's Old Irish Pub, 348 Main Street, Winooski, Vermont, is the holder of first and third class liquor licenses by which it is permitted to sell alcoholic liquor for on premise consumption.
- 2. General Regulation Nos. 16, 17, 17(a), 36 and 49(a) are set forth in full in the Findings of Fact and are self-explanatory.
- 3. The Board has individually and collectively reviewed and discussed State's Exhibits 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, and the testimony of Fitzgerald, Cote and Thibault, as well as the Receipt of Notice (Appendix A) and DLC Ticket (Appendix B) of which the Board has taken judicial notice, and concludes as follows:
- (a) The Licensee, Rockie-Jon, received good and sufficient notice in fact of the Board's continued enforcement hearing taking place on May 30, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. at the Department of Liquor Control's facilities at 13 Green Mountain Drive, Montpelier, Vermont.

 This conclusion is driven by the testimony of Fitzgerald and the impact of State's 1 and 2.
- (b) Rockie-Jon further received good and sufficient notice of the substance of the allegations of General Regulation violations by Rockie-Jon on January 28 into January 29,

2012 and February 10 into February 11, 2012. The Board finds this conclusion unquestionable considering:

- (i) Jay William O'Brien, as President of Rockie-John, personally signed the "Receipt of Notice" on March 26, 2012 when DLC Investigator Jamie Chase personally served the Notice of Hearing and Violation Reports of Cote and Thibault on Rockie-Jon; and
- (ii) DLC "Ticket" #00737 was served upon Rockie-Jon on February 23, 2012, at which time it was signed for by Jay W. O'Brien. The ticket specified each of the violations alleged to have occurred.
- 4. The Board concludes from the four Violation Reports which were unchallenged and which appear to the Board to be reasonable in content that there were seven violations of General Regulation No. 17 and two of General Regulation No. 17(a).
- 5. General Regulation No. 17 and General Regulation No. 17(a) violations result from over service of alcoholic beverages and inattention to or gross neglect of the condition of alcohol consuming patrons. Once patrons display their intoxication, there has occurred a downward change in control of body functions that can take many and multiple forms but all, to a greater or lesser degree, dull the senses and create stupor of mind and body.

A person in such a state has given the licensee, the bartender or the server of alcohol gradually increasing evidence of their intoxication long before it becomes a gross display.

Mandatory training given by the DLC to all licensees, bartenders and other alcohol servers informs, with great emphasis, on how to avoid over service in the beginning and

how to detect it and deal with it once it has occurred. The Licensee, and its alcohol serving agents have materially ignored what they have learned.

6. A person displaying intoxication is a danger to himself and anyone he encounters. He is a public health and safety risk.

Repeated violations of over service, i.e. General Regulation No. 17 and General Regulation No. 17(a), cannot be tolerated.

- 7. On January 28, 2012, the bartender "Jay" at Rockie-Jon was drinking Dr. McGillicuddy liquor, which he had neatly placed on ice for his enjoyment. This is strictly prohibited by General Regulation No. 16.
- 8. Bartenders and other alcohol servers need to be alert to the needs and condition of their patrons and to the avoidance of liquor law and regulation violations. Drinking causes a relaxation in the alertness and diligence expected of alcohol servers. Consequently, such a bartender for example is more tolerant of over service to patrons. Once again, there is a public health and safety aspect to this violation which cannot be tolerated.
- 9. When the bartender is the only employee on duty and he is drinking while on duty, the over service violations which occurred on January 28 and January 29, 2012 are almost predictable. The violation of General Regulation No. 16 occurred at Rockie-Jon as stated.
- 10. The prohibition of General Regulation No. 49(a) against the furnishing of alcoholic beverages without charge is based upon the well established presumption that patrons will over consume when alcohol is furnished to them without charge whereas if alcoholic beverages have to be paid for, the consumption of alcohol by a patron who has to pay for it is more moderate, at least by the avoidance of the free drink.

- 11. Without question, Rockie-Jon violated General Regulation No. 49(a) on January 28, 2012.
- 12. The Board concludes that General Regulation No. 36 was violated when Rockie-Jon permitted a patron to smoke a marijuana cigarette in the smoking area. The fact that it was a marijuana cigarette was detected by not only the Investigator but by nearby patrons who asked for marijuana for themselves. The smoking of a marijuana cigarette is detectable and it is an unlawful experience which Rockie-Jon management permitted to happen.
- 13. Having found that Rockie-Jon was guilty of the violations of General Regulation Nos. 16, 17, 17(a), 36 and 49(a) as alleged in the Notice of Hearing based upon the four Violation Reports in evidence, the Board now turns to the Enforcement History for Rockie-Jon.
- 14. The Enforcement History indicates that a DLC Ticket was issued on or about January 24, 2011 for violation of General Regulation No. 17. This resulted in a hearing and a finding of guilt and Rockie-Jon was given a five day license suspension.
- 15. In June of 2011, a Letter of Warning was sent to Rockie-Jon for a violation of General Regulation No. 12 during a compliance check in that a sale of alcohol was made to an 18 year old. In addition, at that time, for a failure to request identification from the cooperating minor during the alcohol compliance check, Rockie-Jon violated General Regulation No. 13 and paid a fine of \$250.00.
- 16. On August 4, 2005, Rockie-Jon was cited to appear before the LCB for a hearing for a violation of 32 V.S.A. § 10203. Section 10203 deals with the sale and distribution of break open tickets, a gambling device. Rockie-Jon waived a hearing in this matter and accepted a 21 day license suspension.

- 17. The laws of the State of Vermont relative to the sale of alcoholic liquor are contained in part in Title 7 of Vermont Statutes Annotated. The preamble to Title 7 makes it clear that the laws dealing with alcoholic beverages are based in part upon the police power of the State of Vermont and have as their purpose the protection of the public welfare, its good order, and the health, peace, safety and morals of its people. The provisions of Title 7 are to be liberally construed for the accomplishment of this purpose. (7 V.S.A. § 1).
- 18. The LCB is mandated to supervise and manage the sale of spirituous liquors in accordance with Title 7 and its provisions and to enforce the laws relating to intoxicating liquor. (7 V.S.A. § 104, 7 V.S.A. Chapter 9).
- 19. The LCB shall administer and enforce the provisions of Title 7 and may make rule and regulation for that purpose. (7 V.S.A. § 108).
- 20. The LCB has the power to suspend or revoke any permit or license to sell or dispense liquor granted under the provisions of Title 7 and under its own rules and regulations, if it finds that such permitee or licensee has violated a provision of Title 7 or its own rules and regulations. (7 V.S.A. § 236).
- 21. The Board concludes that the first and third class liquor licenses granted to Rockie-Jon must be revoked. Rockie-Jon for a significant period of time has displayed a laxity with respect to Vermont's liquor laws and this Board's regulations which constitute a hazard and danger to the health and safety of its own patrons as well as the general public. Past violations which were punished by suspension of liquor license have not brought about the hoped for reformation.
- 22. Revocation of the Rockie-Jon Incorporated liquor licenses shall occur when the service of this Decision is made upon Rockie-Jon Incorporated.

DECISION

It is the unanimous decision of the Liquor Control Board that the first and third class liquor licenses granted to Rockie-Jon Incorporated, d/b/a O'Brien's Old Irish Pub, 348 Main Street, Winooski, Vermont, be revoked for the violations of the Board's regulations as set forth in this Decision. The violations are across the spectrum so to speak and show a lack of concern by its owner and its management. The fact that the Licensee did not even appear for the merits hearing on May 30, 2012 is further evidence of that lack of concern.

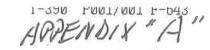
Dated at So. Burlington, Vermont, on this 22 day of June

2012

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD

Bv:

Hyham O'Bium Stephanie M. O'Brien, Chair



Michael J. Hogan, Commissioner

Situte of Vermont
Department of Liques Control
13 Green Mountain Drive
Montpolier, VT 05602
Removement of Ligues Control

[phone] .802-828-2339 [fod] 802-828-1031

Receipt of Notice

Received this date from Liquor Control Investigator Chase, a Receipt of Notice for a Notice of Hearing for said licensee to the April 11, 2012 Liquor Control Board Hearing.

Rockie-Jon Incorporated d/b/a O'Brien's Old Irish Pub 348 Main Street Winooski, Vermont 05404

3/26/12

(Date)



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Written Warning No Fines or Penalties copy of warning placed in licensee file General Regulation # 160 WHICH CONSTITUTES A VIOLATION OF: TITLE 7 Provision: 7VSA

Administrative Referral ☐ See Attached Waiver Fine Ticaring

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