



### **Belmont Citizen Herald Question:**

*In light of the recent liquor license debacle caused by an error with the way licenses were filed by the town, two out of three selectmen voting in favor of transferring the license to a major supermarket chain, former Selectman Andy Rojas who didn't disclose that he was the architect for The Loading Dock until halfway through its hearing for the liquor license, the ABCC granting the license transfer even though there was an appeal in place and now the town granting a pouring license to The Loading Dock with the condition that it is not transferable until the town reaches a decision on the transferability of liquor licenses, what do you think would have been the right way to handle this whole situation from start to finish?*

### **Adam's Response:**

I support our local businesses, and I enjoy the Loading Dock.

Still, the controversy and bad feelings surrounding its liquor license could have been prevented. I handle liquor license matters in my law practice in other municipalities, and I have seen how well it can be done.

There are many things we can do in Belmont to improve the process:

- Codify the goals for liquor licenses, which were discussed by Town Meeting when we first approved liquor licenses. (Previously, Belmont was a “dry” town.)
- Officially decide whether we should allow future license transfers, which is currently scheduled for the May Town Meeting.
- Create an Alcoholic Beverage Licensing Committee to vet liquor license applications before approval by the Selectmen, which would help remove politics from the process.
- Detail the criteria for awarding licenses in the Belmont regulations, instead of leaving it vague and, seemingly, arbitrary. Applicants want predictability and clarity, and the public wants transparency. Alcohol license regulations typically include requirements such as:
  1. Provide concrete evidence of notice to abutters, instead of the current vague statement in the regulations.
  2. Analyze the traffic impact of any proposed license.
  3. Include prior approval by police, fire, health departments, and the building inspector.
  4. Require a certificate from the Treasurer and Belmont Light that payments due to the Town are current.

Fixing the licensing process makes it easier and predictable for business owners and creates vibrant business districts for Belmont residents. Belmont can institute best practices, but we need to act.