



City of Columbus
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGY MEETING FORMAT
(Statutes Section 13D.02)
Liquor License

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Public Hearing will be held by the City Council on Wednesday, February 22, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as parties may be heard. This hearing will be conducted in person and by Interactive Technology at the Columbus City Hall located at 16319 Kettle River Blvd., Columbus, Minnesota to consider a request by the license applicant for on-site “On Sale Intoxicating”, “Sunday”, and “2:00 AM” liquor licenses. Members of the public interested in attending in person or monitoring the meetings should contact the City Offices at 651.464.3120 or visit the City Website for information at ColumbusMN.us. The hearing shall continue until all evidence and testimony has been received.

License Applicant:	North Metro Harness Initiative, LLC
Trade Name d/b/a:	Running Aces Casino, Hotel & Racetrack
Property Owners:	North Metro Harness Initiative, LLC Aces Hotel LLC
Property Location:	Identified premises at: 15201 and 15215 Zurich Street a.k.a. Running Aces Boulevard Columbus, Minnesota

Lorie Spangler

Lorie Spangler
Deputy Clerk

Submitted to the Forest Lake Times on February 6, 2023
Published in the Forest Lake Times on February 9, 2023
Posted on February 9, 2023

Memorandum

To: Mayor and City Council, City of Columbus

From: Jacob W. Steen

Date: February 22, 2023

Re: Running Aces Casino, Hotel & Racetrack – 2023 On-Sale Liquor License
15201 and 15215 Zurich Street, Columbus, Minnesota

Introduction

The City of Columbus (the “City”) has received a liquor license application (the “Application”) for North Metro Harness Initiative, LLC (“NMHI”) dba Running Aces Casino, Hotel & Racetrack (“Running Aces”) for a renewal hotel liquor license with Sunday and 2 AM sales for the 2023 licensing year, from 02/24/2023 to 02/23/2024. Running Aces is currently operating under an on-sale retail intoxicating liquor license with Sunday and 2 AM sales for the hotel, restaurant, card room, patio, and trout pond (“Licensed Premises”). The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a summary of the Licensed Premises and operations for the 2023 liquor license issuance. We conclude with a recommendation that the City approve an on-sale hotel liquor license subject to several conditions of approval.

Discussion

1. Licensed Premises

NMHI has continuously held an on-sale liquor license for the premises (15201 Zurich Street, Columbus) since 2008. In 2016, the City Council approved expansion of the Licensed Premises to include the fenced trout pond area. In 2019, the City Council approved a new license to include the entirety of Running Aces under a hotel liquor license. The Licensed Premises is divided into six secured and contiguous areas identified as A1 through A6, as shown on the attached Exhibit A. Each area is described below.

- a. Running Aces First Floor (Area A1): includes the public areas of the first floor of what is referred to as the Running Aces “Casino,” including indoor atrium, card room, VIP lounge, event spaces, bar, and restaurant areas.
- b. Outdoor Apron (Area A2): Area A2 is a fenced and secured outdoor apron and patio that is contiguous with the indoor liquor service area of the restaurant.

- c. Fenced Grassy Area (Area A3): Area A3 is a fenced and secured area that is contiguous to the outdoor apron area described as A2.
- d. Fenced Trout Pond Area (Area A4): Area A4 is a fenced area around the manmade trout pond. The trout pond is accessible to patrons via an exterior gated entrance that is located west of the racetrack's primary building entrance, as well as internal access from an area adjacent to the card room.
- e. Hotel (Area A5): Area A5 consists of the hotel lobby, hotel rooms, bar, breakfast area, and meeting rooms, which are contiguous to Area A1 and connected by a fully enclosed pedestrian walkway.
- f. Finish Line Plaza (Area A6): Area A6 is described as Finish Line Plaza, an enclosed outdoor plaza. This area is contiguous with areas A1 and A2.

Areas A1-A6 will function together as a compact and contiguous premises with a fully secured perimeter. As a single licensed premises, liquor served in one area may be brought to the other areas by patrons. The days and hours of liquor service in the individual areas will be dictated by business volume and customer demand.

2. Background Checks and Review of Licensing Criteria

We have reviewed the application materials and have confirmed that the materials submitted, including character references, satisfy state and local requirements. The current applicants (the "Applicants") are as follows:

- a. Taro Jun Ito, President and CEO;
- b. Tracie Lynn Wilson, CFO; and

Minnesota law requires that background checks are conducted for all liquor license applications. *Minn. Stat. § 340A.402, subd. 2*. The Anoka County Sheriff's department has conducted the background checks on each of the Applicants. None of the background checks identified any record of liquor law violations in the last five years that would preclude issuance of the license under state or City law.

3. Security and Liquor Law Violations

The Licensed Premises has a fully secured perimeter, including the fenced and gated outdoor areas. The City has historically required trained security staff located at the gated entrances and exits to monitor liquor consumption, to ensure that liquor is not removed from or brought onto the premises, and to eliminate over-serving or service to minors. Due to the requirements of the Minnesota Racing Commission, the pedestrian walkway between Area A1 and A5 has doors that, when open, will allow guests to walk from outside of the parking lot to the racetrack without entering the card room. To ensure responsible liquor service, we have recommended a condition that the exterior entrance must be staffed by security personnel while these doors are in use for events and races, which is consistent with prior requirements for securing any outdoor area in which Liquor is served or can be consumed. (*See Condition 1 in Exhibit B.*)

NMHI has an adopted comprehensive training and security plan intended to provide adequate security to monitor its liquor sales and consumption on the premises. Servers receive regular mandatory training governing alcohol service. In August 2018, the City Council voted to authorize NMHI to implement a training program called Selling Alcohol Legally, Effectively, and Safely (S.A.L.E.S), which is intended to provide more training opportunities for employees.

NMHI has received one violation for underage sales since 2008. In July 2016, the Anoka County Sheriff's Office conducted a routine alcohol compliance inspection at NMHI. As part of the inspection, a minor was served alcohol without being asked for identification. There have been no liquor offenses since that time. NMHI did fail a tobacco compliance check in August of 2022; however, that does not preclude issuance of a liquor license.

No complaints have been received by the City regarding liquor sales at Running Aces Harness Park. NMHI has otherwise been responsible for the conduct and order at Running Aces Harness Park. *City Code, § 4-517.B.*

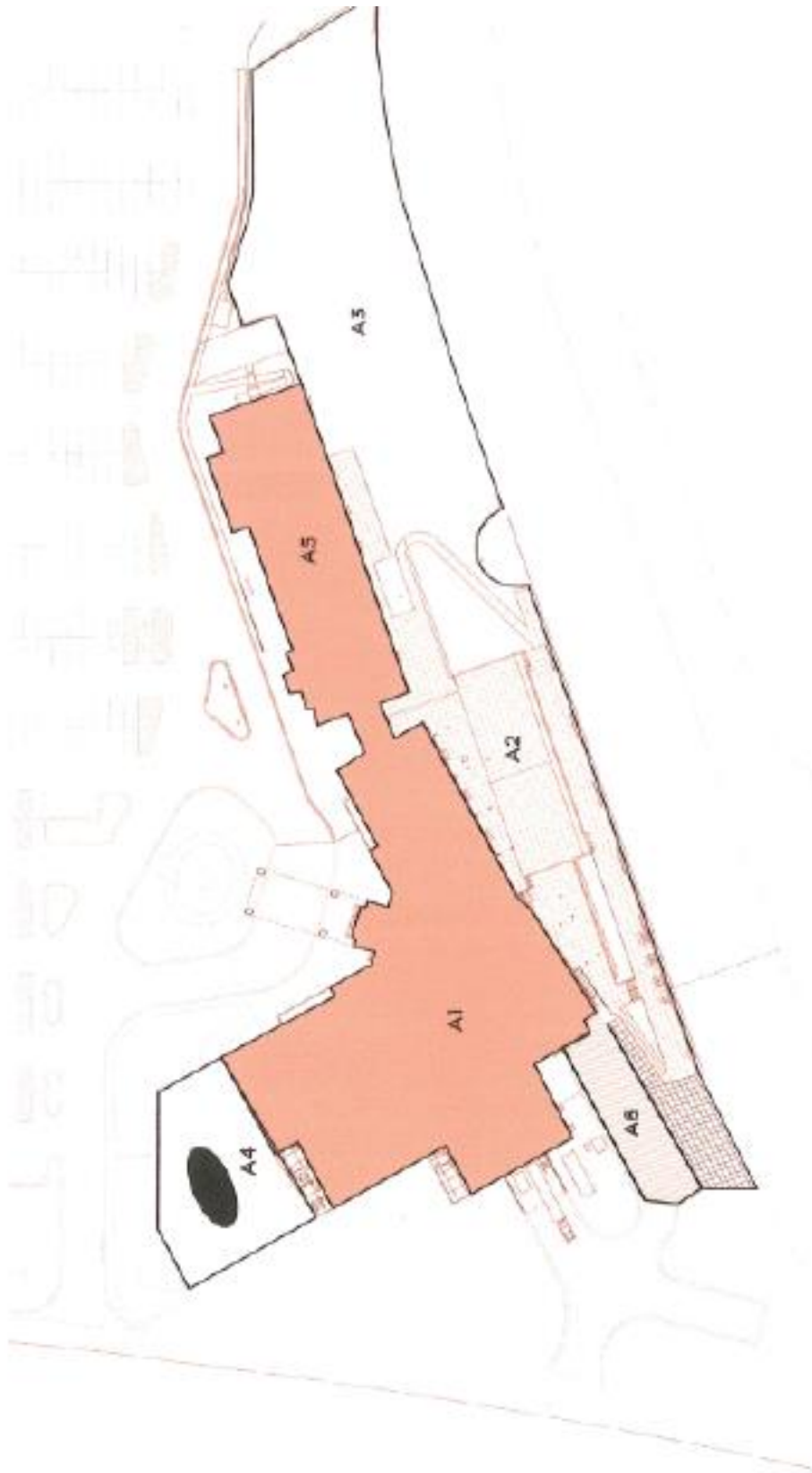
Recommendation

We recommend approval of the Application, subject to the following conditions:

- a. NMHI must continue to meet all liquor license conditions as described in Exhibit B.
- b. NMHI must continue to meet all additional liquor license conditions set forth in the City Code, Section 4-517.

Please feel free to contact us regarding any questions on our review of the Application.

EXHIBIT A
Licensed Premises “Areas”



Carrington Group
May 20th, 2018

Running Area
Landscape Development Background

EXHIBIT B

Conditions for the North Metro Harness Initiative, LLC dba Running Aces Casino, Hotel & Racetrack License for an On-Sale Intoxicating, Sunday Liquor Sales, and Optional 2 am.

1. The license is for the clearly defined Licensed Premises as submitted in the diagrams in Exhibit A (areas identified as A1: Running Aces first floor; A2 Outdoor Apron; A3: Fenced Grassy Area; A4: Trout Pond; A5 Hotel; and A6 Finish Line Plaza) (collectively, the “Licensed Premises”), including gated entrance and exits with security personnel at each such entrance/exit during times when liquor service is available.
2. NMHI must continue to meet all additional liquor license conditions set forth in the City Code, Section 4-517.
3. There will be no alcohol allowed on the grounds anywhere outside the Licensed Premises, unless otherwise permitted by a catering license.
4. The President and CEO of NMHI or its food and beverage manager must certify that: 1) all personnel associated with dispensing or serving alcoholic beverages; and 2) all security personnel posted at gated entrances and exits be trained using an alcohol services training program, which must consist of Training for Intervention Procedures (TIPS); Alcohol Liability Education Training (ALE); or Selling Alcohol Legally, Effectively, and Safely (S.A.L.E.S).
5. This license is subject to compliance with all applicable federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations, including without limitation, licensing regulations for restaurant operations, gambling operations and concessions.
6. Quarterly Utility payments must be made in a timely manner.
7. NMHI must adequately fence and secure all exterior areas of the Licensed Premises where liquor sales and consumption will be allowed.
8. NMHI will ensure that all areas of the Licensed Premises, including outdoors, will be monitored by surveillance cameras during the hours in which alcoholic beverages are served.
9. NMHI will provide adequate security personnel as dictated by conditions. Current staffing levels will be monitored and increased if necessary.



Rhonda Sivarajah
County Administrator

Anoka County

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

Respectful, Innovative, Fiscally Responsible

**COPY FOR CITY
ADMINISTRATOR**

This letter was sent to all elected officials of the cities located in the Coon Creek Watershed District

February 3, 2023

The Honorable Jesse Preiner
Mayor, City of Columbus
16319 Kettle River Blvd. NE
Columbus, MN 55025

RE: Coon Creek Watershed District Appointments

Dear Mayor Preiner:

In accordance with the provisions of Minn. Stat. § 103B.227, Anoka County in February 2023 published a notice that a term will expire for two managers on the Coon Creek Watershed District Board of Managers. The notice publication requirement applies because Coon Creek Watershed District is considered a watershed management organization. The published notice states that persons interested in being appointed may submit their names to the appointing authority, which is the county board, for a watershed district appointment. For your information, a copy of the notice is enclosed.

In appointing a manager to the Coon Creek Watershed District, Minn. Stat. § 103D.311 is applicable. This statute requires a county board, upon the expiration of a term, to appoint a manager for a watershed district from an aggregate list of three or more persons nominated jointly or severally by towns and municipalities within the district. The list must be submitted 60 days before the manager's term of office expires. The current managers' terms expire on May 27, 2023. Therefore, in order for the county to accept nominations, they must be received by Tuesday, March 28, 2023.

Each city may submit one or more nominees for consideration. Cities may also choose to submit a joint list containing one or more nominees. For reference, the affected cities with territory located in the Coon Creek Watershed District are Andover, Blaine, Columbus, Coon Rapids, Fridley, Ham Lake, and Spring Lake Park.

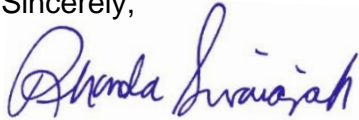
To be considered a list under the statutory definition, the aggregate list of names must contain at least three nominees eligible to be appointed. To be eligible for an appointment, a nominee must reside within the watershed district boundaries, be eligible to vote in the district, and not be a public officer of the county, state, or federal government (except that a soil and water conservation supervisor can be appointed).

Minn. Stat. § 103D.311 requires the county to appoint a manager to the watershed district from an aggregate list of city-submitted nominees, unless the total number of nominees is less than three or the county finds that none of the nominated persons can fairly represent the various hydrologic areas within the watershed district. The managers whose terms expire on May 27, 2023, are Matthew Herbst and Jim Hafner. A map with the location of current board members highlighted is being forwarded to the Columbus city manager/administrator. The county board may appoint any eligible individual who resides within the watershed district as long as that appointee can fairly represent the various hydrologic areas within the district.

If the county does not receive a valid list of nominees, it may appoint a qualified manager from a town or municipality that failed to submit a list of nominees. All applicants must submit a completed application form to the appointing authority. Find the application at [here](#).

If you have any questions regarding this appointment process, you may contact me at 763-324-4715.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rhonda Sivarajah". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue rectangular background.

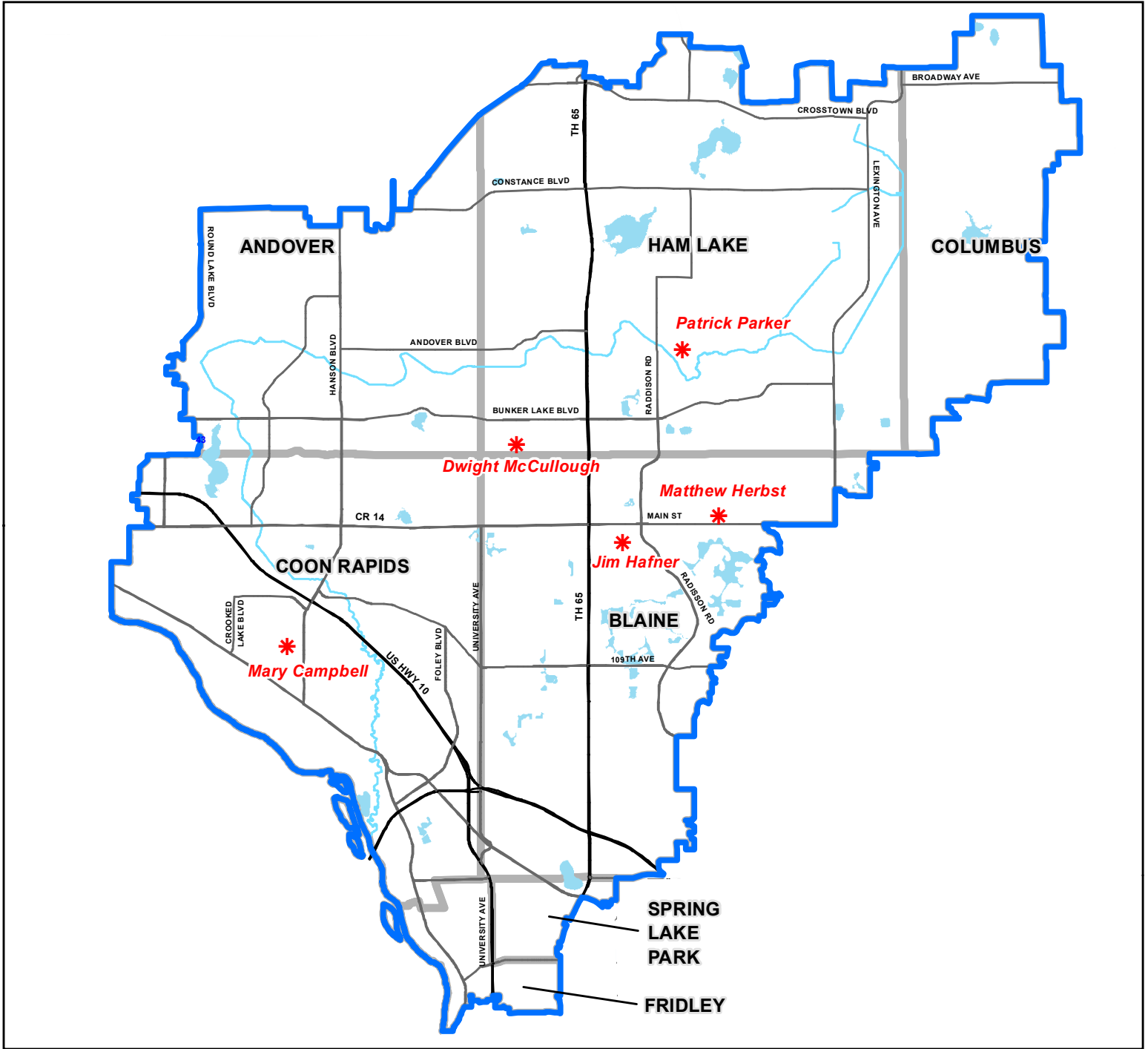
Rhonda Sivarajah
County Administrator
763-324-4715

Rhonda.Sivarajah@co.anoka.mn.us

RS:bv
Enclosure

c: Columbus City Manager/Administrator or Clerk
Brenda Vetter, Associate Administrative Assistant

Coon Creek Watershed District



Legend



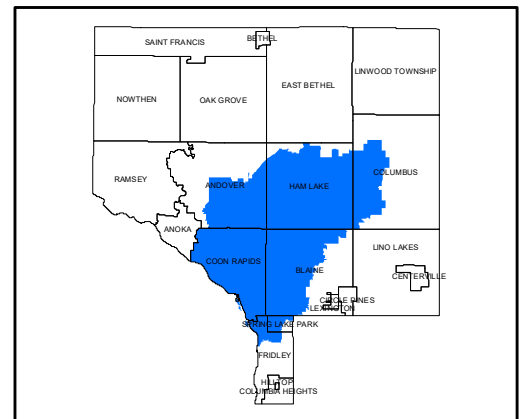
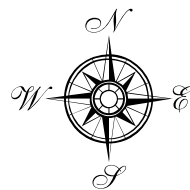
Current Managers



Watershed District Boundary



Community Boundary



City of Columbus Calendar of Meetings

February & March 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
19	20 Presidents Day Holiday Offices Closed	21	22 6:00 pm CC Mtg.	23 5:30 pm Park Board Mtg.	24	25
26	27	28	1 March 6:00 pm PC Mtg.	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 6:00 pm CC Mtg.	9	10	11