



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

COMPETITIVE ALCOHOLIC LIQUOR PRICING TASK FORCE

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 11, 2012

11:00 AM in Room 1B of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 11:01 AM by Chairwoman, Rep. Kathy Tallarita, 58th District.

The following task force members were present:

Rep. Kathy Tallarita, 58th District; Mark Abrahamson; Lt. Don Crabtree (on behalf of Chief James Cetran); Ed Crowley; Brian Durand (OPM); David Leon; Dr. Stanley McMillen; Rep. Rosa Rebimbas, 70th District; Commissioner William Rubenstein (DCP); David Rutigliano; Rosemary Cleary (on behalf of DRS Commissioner Sullivan); Commissioner Kevin B. Sullivan (DRS)

Absent were: Edward Berthiaume; Dr. Ian Ayres; Rep. Mary Fritz, 90th District; Rep. Sandy Nafis, 27th District

Rep. Tallarita opened the task force's organizational meeting by welcoming everyone in attendance. She also thanked the panel members for their commitment to serve on the task force.

Rep. Tallarita introduced herself as the State Representative from the 58th District in Enfield. In addition, she stated she is honored to be co-chairing this task force. Rep.

Tallarita asked that each task force member introduce themselves and give a brief statement on their background and what they would like to see the task force cover. Each member in attendance introduced themselves accordingly.

- Dr. Stan McMillen is a former managing economist at the Department of Economic and Community Development and presently an economics professor at Trinity College and University Of Connecticut. Dr. McMillen worked with Governor Malloy to review the economic impact of his 2012 liquor law proposal. Dr. McMillen is one of the Governor's designees.
- Rep. Rosa Rebimbas represents the 70th House District and is currently the House Ranking Member of the General Law Committee.
- Lt. Don Crabtree with the Wethersfield Police department, who was standing in for Chief James Cetran. Chief Cetran was appointed to the task force by the Senate Co-Chair of the General Law committee, Senator Paul Doyle.
- David Rutigliano is a co-owner and operator of the SBC Restaurant Group and is the legislative chair for the Connecticut Restaurant Association. He was appointed by the House Minority Leader, Rep. Larry Cafero.
- Rosemary Cleary is Commissioner Sullivan's designee from the Department of Revenue Services.
- Steve Palmer is the clerk of the General Law Committee and will be staffing the Competitive Alcoholic Liquor Pricing Task Force.
- Mark Abrahamson co-owns Mo's Wine and Spirits in Fairfield and Wilton Wine Shop in Wilton. He was appointed by the Senator Minority Leader, Senator John McKinney.
- David Leon is the owner of Super Cellar Warehouse Liquors in Avon. He has been in retail for 25 years and previously worked for a major wine distributor. He was appointed by Senator Witkos, Senate Ranking Member of the General Law Committee.
- Brian Durand works for the Office of Policy Management and is one of Governor Malloy's designees. He helped draft the Governor's original liquor reform proposal.
- Bill Rubenstein is the Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection.
- Edward Crowley is the President and Chief Operating Officer of Dichello Distributors in Orange, CT. He has been in the distributing business for over 36 years. He was appointed by the Senate Majority Leader, Senator Martin Looney.
- Kevin Sullivan is the Commissioner of the Department of Revenue Services.

Rep. Tallarita then introduced the rest of the staff that will be assisting the task force: Rich Hanratty, LCO Attorney; Duke Chen, OLR Researcher; and fiscal analysts Alan Shepard, Evelyn Arnold, and Chris Wetzel from OFA. The task force is also being assisted by James Demetriades, a legislative intern with Senator Doyle's office.

Rep. Tallarita remarked that the task force was created as part of the compromise legislation which passed the General Assembly this Spring that permitted Sunday sales of alcohol in Connecticut. She noted that in her hometown of Enfield she saw a great number of cars with Massachusetts license plates visiting Connecticut package stores on Memorial Day; a first under the newly revised law (package stores are closed on holidays like Memorial Day in Massachusetts). She also noted that working collaboratively with all interested parties during the legislative session made the new law possible and she hopes to continue that collaboration with this new task force and its members.

Using the PowerPoint presentation provided by staff, Rep. Tallarita led a review of the task force's mission according to Public Act 12-17.

After reviewing the task force's mission and its goals, task force members discussed a potential meeting schedule. The consensus reached included a monthly meeting of the entire task force, with the creation of several subcommittees that will review each of the task force's required topics separately.

Rep. Tallarita announced that the next meeting date for the task force is on hold, pending further discussion with her co-chair, Ed Berthiaume; who was unable to attend today's meeting due to a previously scheduled family vacation. In addition, Rep. Tallarita stated that she will contact each task force member individually to discuss on which subcommittees they would like to serve.

Commissioner Sullivan of the Department of Revenue Services offered to provide and present to the task force a PowerPoint presentation on the current alcohol tax structure in Connecticut. Likewise, Commissioner Rubenstein of the Department of Consumer Protection offered to conduct a similar presentation on the current regulatory structure and how Connecticut compares with our neighboring states. Rep. Tallarita thanked them for their suggestions and asked that those presentations be made at the next meeting so that task force members can review these issues. In addition, Rep. Tallarita would like to hear from invited speakers from the various parties not clearly represented on the task force. For example, she would like to hear from small and large grocery stores as well as small distributors.

David Rutigliano voiced his concerns about the use of subcommittees to review the issues outlined in the task force's mission. Specifically, he was concerned that the Restaurant industry (of which he represents as Legislative Chair of the Restaurant Association) would not have a seat at the table for all of these subcommittee meetings and thus would be without a voice. For example, all of the issues outlined in the task force's mission, with the exception of minimum bottle pricing, have an impact on his industry. Rep. Tallarita remarked that the subcommittees' meetings would be open to the public and he would be free to attend each meeting if he so chose. Also, he would be free to volunteer to serve on as many subcommittees as he would like. In addition, as a task force member, he would be able to review and comment on all of the findings

and any recommendations brought forward by each of the task force's subcommittees at our monthly task force meetings.

David Leon suggested that the task force look at additional issues, such as the current geographic territories and the impact on retailers' purchasing options and prices. Rep. Tallarita agreed. She would like to look at the current 3 Tier system of alcohol distribution as well and stated that these issues would be reviewed by the Permit subcommittee.

There being no further discussion or questions, a motion was duly made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:28 AM.

Stephen A. Palmer
Clerk