



NORTHAMPTON LICENSE COMMISSION

City Hall, Office of the Mayor

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COMMISSIONERS

Natasha Yakovlev, Chair

Jennifer Ewers

Amy Cahillane

Mayoral Operations Manager

Annie Lesko

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MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHAMPTON LICENSE COMMISSION

Wednesday, January 7, 2026 ◆ 2:00 p.m.

Remote Meeting

The City of Northampton does not discriminate based on disability and is committed to hosting accessible meetings. To request a reasonable accommodation to attend any City meeting, please contact the ADA Coordinator at: adacoordinator@northamptonma.gov or call 413-587-1288.

The January 7, 2026, License Commission meeting was held via remote participation.

Join Virtual Meeting

- **Video Conference:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85470706313?pwd=Mo1RkLKl1faNW6yjYaafzVbv6y84G3.1>

OR

- **Telephone, call:** +1-305-224-1968, Meeting ID: 854 7070 6313, Passcode: 608122

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER by Commissioner Yakovlev

ROLL CALL - Commissioners Yakovlev, Ewers, and Cahillane were all present

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ZOOM RECORDING made by Commissioner Yakovlev

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

3. APPLICATIONS FOR SHORT-TERM LIQUOR LICENSES FOR ARTS NIGHT OUT

Downtown Northampton Association

Event: Arts Night Out

Dates/Times: January 9, 2026; February 13, 2026; March 13, 2026; April 10, 2026; May 8, 2026; June 12, 2026; July 10, 2026; August 14, 2026; September 11, 2026; October 9, 2026; November 13, 2026, December 11, 2026; 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Locations: Oniomania, LLC d/b/a Cedar Chest and Stay Golden; ASSEMBLE, LLC d/b/a ASSEMBLE Made and Curated; Lulublu, Inc. d/b/a Pinch; Click Workspace, Inc.; Ichor, LLC d/b/a Familiars Coffee & Tea; Thornes Marketplace, LLC; Hope and Feathers Framing; Jo Smith Studio Gallery; Northampton Community Arts Trust d/b/a Northampton Center for the Arts

Type: Wine & Malt

Amanda Shafi, Board President of the Downtown Northampton Association, was present for the Arts Night Out application for 2026. She stated that the DNA is trying to bring crowds to Northampton and is excited to see the interest it has generated.

Commissioner Cahillane moved to approve the application for Arts Night Out on the dates, times, and locations as detailed in the agenda item, subject to approval and inspection by the Building Department. Commissioner Ewers seconded. The motion passed 3-0 by a roll call vote.

4. HEARING ON NOISE AND SAFETY COMPLAINTS AT 24 MAIN STREET AND CONSIDERATION OF POTENTIAL MODIFICATION OF THE ENTERTAINMENT LICENSE HELD BY PEDIGO-WOOD, LLC D/B/A HAZE

Commissioner Yakovlev moved to open the public hearing at 2:04 p.m. Commissioner Cahillane seconded, and the hearing was opened by a 3-0 roll call vote.

Eric Bennett, 26 Main Street, was present and submitted a letter for the public record (attached). Eric stated that his concern is not with the business owner personally, but with the city and the License Commission for allowing what was originally approved as a café and bar to effectively operate as a nightclub, without sufficient consideration that the location is within a residential block. He stated that while Anja has lowered sound levels somewhat and has been responsive, there is little she can do to operate a viable club and rock performance space adjacent to residences without significant soundproofing. He shared that the impacts have affected residents' quality of life, including families with children who now feel they must leave their homes due to the noise.

Commissioner Yakovlev noted that the Commission had extensive discussion about this entertainment license at the time it was initially approved. She emphasized that the location is within a commercial block and that the Commission stated at that time that, should complaints arise, it would revisit the matter and consider potentially modifying the hours of entertainment.

Eric Bennett stated that he previously experienced similar noise issues when Majestic operated in the space and had a comparable understanding with Phil Peake at that time. He described an informal arrangement where, if the music became too loud, he could text the owner and the volume would be turned down. Despite this, he reported that he now goes to sleep using earplugs and white noise. He emphasized that he does not want the business to be shut down. Eric reported that he approached the landlord to discuss the possibility of installing soundproofing in the ceiling, but was told this would not be permitted due to the antique tin ceiling.

Maria Grove, 26 Main Street, stated that her primary concerns are safety and noted that she can hear activity very clearly from her apartment and described several disturbing incidents that have caused her fear and concern, including a male voice becoming agitated and slamming doors and a woman inside screaming, "Let me go, please let me go," for approximately 30 minutes. While Maria acknowledged that the noise levels were previously more manageable and not as loud as other venues, she stated that live music now occurs every single day, unlike prior establishments, where performances were limited and predictable. She expressed that the current situation feels unregulated and unsafe, noting that a visiting family member's

15-month-old child was unable to sleep due to the noise. She concluded by stating she does not feel comfortable living there under these conditions and believes she may have to move out.

Commissioner Yakovlev noted that the Commission received an anonymous complaint in December regarding a seven-piece band performing with equipment spread across the floor, blocking the rear emergency exit and restricting access to the bathroom, creating an unsafe environment.

Anja Wood stated she's working on putting up more sound paneling. She discussed further soundproofing options with the landlord, but because the ceiling is historic, installation would require drilling, which isn't feasible. After the last meeting, the landlord agreed that sound paneling could be added in the corner where bands typically play. Anja is also working with Ronan, a sound company that handles sound equipment and mitigation. She noted she has a sound person monitoring decibel levels. She noted that she makes an effort to be mindful of residents living above the space, including prohibiting the use of subwoofers, using a decibel reader, and reminding performers to keep volume, especially the bass, low. She explained that managing sound can be challenging because bands often bring their own amplifiers and equipment, making it trial and error to find appropriate levels. She reiterated that she is actively working to make the space function for everyone and does not want it to be unlivable for upstairs residents. She acknowledged that she knew these challenges would come with operating the space and is still navigating them, noting that sound mitigation takes time and significant financial investment. She also stated that the landlord indicated that it is included in tenants' leases that there is a bar located downstairs. In terms of safety, Anja described an incident involving an employee who had a partner with concerning behavior, which she was not aware of at the time. Some staff members had keys until she heard concerns raised by Maria. After reviewing security camera footage, the employee no longer works there. Anja clarified that the individual involved was not an employee but the partner of an employee, and that the situation has since been addressed. She described the incident as unfortunate and difficult.

Commissioner Yakovlev asked about her business partner, Jonathan Pedigo.

Anja Wood noted that he was a silent partner and no longer working for her. Right now, she has six people working for her: two hired for security, three bartenders, and a person managing sound. She noted that coordinating bands can be challenging, particularly since she is not always the person booking them. On Tuesday nights, they host Dead cover bands, which tend to involve larger groups, though they typically aim to limit bands to five performers. Rugs are placed on the floor, and while some spillover occurs, staff try to keep bands in an area where there is enough space. She is closed on Mondays and Thursdays. Currently, live music is scheduled on Tuesdays and Sundays, karaoke on Wednesdays, and DJs on Fridays and Saturdays. To address concerns, they are adjusting the schedule: Sundays will shift to open mics with quieter, softer sets, and Thursdays will now have live music that previously took place on Sundays. She stated she'd been closing at 1 a.m. on Friday and Saturday during the winter and trying to book earlier sets. She typically opens at 7 p.m. and music starts between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. On Fridays and Saturdays, the DJs start at 10 p.m.

Commissioner Cahillane asked if there were more complaints during live music or DJ nights.

Anja stated that it's hard to say, and she's trying to shift more toward live music because the nature of DJ nights with loud speakers makes it feel like the sound carries farther. Since she no longer uses a subwoofer, she noted she has to turn the speakers up slightly to maintain sound quality. The speakers are now handling low, mid, and high frequencies, whereas a subwoofer would normally cut out higher frequencies.

The Commission asked for clarification on the relationship with Ronan.

Anja Wood stated the relationship with Ronan is newer, and while she had a plan upon opening to do baffling, one of the requests from the landlord was to preserve the ceiling as much as possible. Ronan will come in the next couple of weeks and look at how the sound travels in the space.

Building Commissioner Kevin Ross noted that the sound paneling foam needs to be fire-rated, and Haze will need to take out a permit through the Building Department.

There was a brief discussion about the issue with the curtain being closed, the lack of an exit sign, and staff not being trained properly on up-to-date fire safety requirements. Commissioner Yakovlev pointed out that Anja is the owner of the establishment and needs to manage the sound more appropriately.

Commissioner Yakovlev moved to close the public hearing at 2:58 p.m. Commissioner Ewers seconded. The motion passed 3-0 by a roll call vote.

Commissioner Yakovlev pointed out that the space has historically been loud and has presented ongoing issues. While there are differences in the types of music being played, similar concerns arose previously with Majestic. Additionally, there are safety concerns related to the curtain and ongoing inconsistency in its use. This issue has been communicated to the license holder on multiple occasions and has not been fully addressed. The approved hours on the license also feel broader than necessary.

The Commission discussed options for amending the license and didn't want to take away days that would pay for sound mitigation measures.

Due to concerns regarding fire safety and ongoing noise complaints from residents, the Commission voted to amend the license and schedule a follow-up meeting in 30 days to receive an update from the license holder.

Commissioner Cahillane moved to modify the entertainment license held by Pedigo-Wood, LLC d/b/a Haze for a period of 30 days, to reflect the following hours of entertainment: Tuesdays from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m., Thursdays from 3 p.m. to 12 a.m., Fridays from 3 p.m. to 12 a.m., and Saturdays from 3 p.m. to 12 a.m., and to require the installation of a fire exit sign above the fire curtain within the 30-day window. Commissioner Ewers seconded. Commissioner Cahillane amended the motion to include that the hours of operation will be revisited in 30 days at a hearing to be scheduled. Commissioner Ewers seconded. The motion passed 3-0 by a roll call vote.

5. NEW BUSINESS

The clerk noted that the city currently has one annual wine and malt license available, and two applications have been submitted for it. Attorney Seawald advised that the Commission may decide which applicant to grant the license to based on the public good.

The clerk noted the cost involved for applicants will be approximately \$600, knowing that only one license will be issued. One applicant has already incurred those costs, as their application was submitted two days before the second application. Both applicants knew that one license remained and that there had been another inquiry, so both parties were aware that there was a competing interest.

The Commission agreed that the license should be issued on a first come first serve basis.

Commissioner Yakovlev asked about the feasibility of getting city-issued email addresses. The clerk noted that the city doesn't issue email addresses for board and committee members. She will double-check.

6. ADJOURN

Commissioner Yakovlev moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:42 p.m. Commissioner Cahillane seconded. The motion passed 3-0 by a roll call vote.