



## Bar Operators Create Peer Association: Burlington, VT

### Nightlife Venues Will Create Standards to Self Regulate

As residents began to integrate into the Church Street Marketplace commercial district in Burlington, Vermont, conflicts emerged. Three cabaret owners, who worked together through Burlington's Hospitality Resource Panel on efforts including a sound ordinance and rerouting taxis to improve closing time egress, organized as an association of peers to focus on proactive collaboration to improve security, service and safety. Though Burlington's Hospitality Resource Panel offered a place at the table for cabaret owners to join other stakeholders in developing strategies to plan, manage and police Burlington's growing nighttime economy, no forum existed for cabaret owners to proactively collaborate as peers.

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### Stakeholders

- Hospitality Resource Panel (HRP)
- Cabaret Owners
- Burlington Police
- Church Street Marketplace
- Farrell's Distributing

### Process

Burlington, VT is a college town with a downtown pedestrian mall, the Church Street Marketplace, which is the center for daytime shopping and nighttime dining and entertainment. As Burlington grew, so did residential and hospitality. With these two interests co-existing in close proximity, conflicts arose. Distrust and misperceptions existed amongst stakeholders, straining relationships.

In 2004, RHI was invited by the Burlington Mayor's office to help the city develop a plan and strategies. As a result, three Burlington stakeholders attended an RHI National Summit and learned of Hospitality Resource Panels as a mechanism for collaborating to improve communication and seek solutions.

As part of the HRP, cabaret owners were invited to the table to work alongside with safety, development and resident stakeholders. Early collaborative successes included crafting Noise Conditions for Entertainment Permits and addressing crowd control at closing time.

The HRP assessed the intersection of Church and Main at closing to suggest improvements. They RHI Leadership Summit Case Study - 10 April 4, 2008 observed thousands of patrons exiting bars and the district at once, trying to find taxis. With more riders than cars, pedestrians ran into the street to secure a taxi and disputes often ensued over competition in claiming the cab.

A late-night, multi-vehicle transportation stand was created at the HRP's recommendation, resulting in greater pedestrian safety and more efficient access to safe rides home.

Bar owners experienced working together and with the city through the HRP and achieved success in a way they had never experienced. They began to look at each other as peers and not competitors. They began to entertain the idea of how else they could work together, but as a more focused alliance than the umbrella HRP. While the HRP is more holistic, they saw they could target on an operational level late-night issues, entertainment, crowd control protocols, intoxicated patrons, etc.

In August 2007, representatives from the Burlington Police Department and Church Street Marketplace and three cabaret owners met to discuss forming an association. Recognizing that their issues and needs differed from restaurants, they agreed that the membership should be limited to cabaret license holders. With the guidance of the BID and Burlington Police Department, the Cabaret Association of Burlington was formed in September 2007 with the following mission:

To create and maintain a symbiotic relationship with the community that celebrates a vibrant, supportive and safe hospitality and entertainment industry in Burlington, beneficial to all through collaboration, partnership and consistent, mutually agreed-upon rules and regulations.

Burlington Police Department suggested CAB host door security training. The founding members sought financial support from their small prospective member base and looked to Farrell Distributing to help them sponsor the 10-hour training. They also sought the distributors' participation in discussions about the mission, strategies and advice in structuring the association.

The training held in November 2007 highlighted the positive, proactive stance CAB wanted to carry out as an association. With more members on board, they sought their buy-in by including them in the process of crafting Guiding Principles.

Still in its infancy, CAB started operations under the non-profit Church Street Marketplace Foundation, but plans to incorporate as an independent non-profit organization. They meet one hour monthly at 1:00 pm, rotating locations so each member can host. They prepare agendas in advance and communicate through their e-mail list between meetings.

#### Guiding Principles

As of March 2008, 10 of the 19 cabaret licensees have pledged and adopted the following Guiding Principles:

- To work with community members, organizations, businesses, law enforcement, and government officials to promote a successful, safe and vibrant downtown entertainment environment.
- To use training as an effective tool to allow for the continued responsible growth of our hospitality industry.
- To work with, support, communicate and hold accountable each member by developing guidelines and local industry standards and acting as a self – regulating, but not independent, leader in our industry.

## Outcome

- An Association of cabaret licensees.
- Since the founding meeting in August 2007, more than 50% of Burlington's cabarets have taken the CAB's membership pledge and adopted their guiding principles.
- In November 2007, CAB hosted a 10-hour Door Security Training, which 20 cabaret owners, managers and staff attended.
- CAB has met monthly since November 2007.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

- **For cabaret owners:** Taking the first step beyond talking about it. Finding time outside of busy businesses. Financial support for an organization with limited potential membership.
- **For Distributor:** There are many ways to weigh in on public affairs from state capital all the way down to the business district, but only so much time and money.

## Jurisdiction

District, City

## Funding

Principle sponsors for the CAB were Farrell Distributing, Baker Distributing, Magic Hat Brewery and Calmont Beverage

## Spin-off Projects

Future plans for CAB include: I.D. training seminar with Department of Liquor Control. Fire Suppression Demonstration and Fire Extinguisher Training with Fire Department. Multi-agency staged emergency and evacuation drill. Advocating for more approved training providers than the one located three hours from Burlington. Supporting a safe ride program.

Start Date: 8/1/2007 - 5/19/2008

## Contact

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