Client Alert: Updates Coming to the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission

By Adam Barnosky on September 6, 2018



On September 5, 2018 the Massachusetts Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) held an outreach seminar with attorneys and municipal counsel to discuss new rules and procedures covering retail license applications, annual renewals, website updates, and more. Information was provided by Massachusetts State Treasurer Deborah Goldberg and ABCC leadership, including: Commissioner Jean Lorizio, Executive Director Ralph Sacramone, and Licensing Supervisor Ryan Mellville. Below is summary of the updates:

Agency Budget Increase & New Hires. The treasurer secured additional funding for the ABCC, which will be used, in part, on new staffing, including: additional investigators, associate general counsel, and upgrading two associate commissioners from part to full time. These will be the first additional hires to the investigations department in over ten years, during which time the licensing caseload nearly doubled.

ABCC Moving Headquarters to Chelsea. The ABCC's lease expired on its Causeway Street location in Boston. In December 2018, the agency will be moving to its new headquarters at 95 Fourth Street in Chelsea. All commission hearings, investigations, and operations will occur at the new location.

New Website. The **ABCC website** rolls out a new site on September 10, 2018. The new site will be mobile friendly and feature several upgrades and pages to streamline the license application and tracking process.

Update on eLicensing Pilot Program. The eLicensing Pilot Program for Retail Applications concluded in early 2018. The Retail Pilot Program – affecting restaurants, bars, package stores, and hotels – has been discontinued for the time being. The ABCC will work with a new software company and local municipalities to streamline the interface and application process, and may re-introduce the program at a later date. The eLicensing program for all non-retail State Licenses, such as Manufacturer, wholesaler, and shipping licenses, will remain in place.

New Retail Application & Exemptions from Licensure. The agency updated all retail applications, which apply primarily to new licenses and transfers of licenses. The changes consolidate duplicative forms and will create a more streamlined application process. In addition, due to the increase of licenses held by retirement funds and investment vehicles, the ABCC will allow certain exemptions for disclosure of beneficial interests in licenses, however all exemptions must be approved in advance by the agency. The old application forms will no longer be accepted after January 1, 2019.

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