

Café Hollywood BZA Nuisance Complaint Hearing

My name is Richard Conti, I am the Albany Common Council Member for the 6th Ward which includes Lark Street and the subject establishment located at 275 Lark Street. I am also a 35 year resident of the neighborhood, including 14 years on Lark Street at the intersection of Hamilton Street.

Tonight's hearing focuses on nuisance activity occurring at the establishment located at 275 Lark Street which has risen to the point that we are formally asking the BZA to find that a nuisance exists which threatens the public health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood and surrounding businesses.

We do not come before this Board lightly, but as documented in the complaint, submitted by myself and Mr. Glass, the record of incidents, and in particular two of the most recent incidents which included a fight involving a machete and an incident which resulted in gunshots, compels us to take this action and ask the Board to make a nuisance finding.

Mr. Glass has already outlined the complaint, I want to call the Board's attention to a letter submitted jointly by the four neighborhood associations surrounding the subject property – Hudson/Park, Center Square, Washington Park and Park South. Specifically, based on concerns raised by residents within a 200 feet radius of the 275 Lark Street, the letter contains observations which include:

- An escalating rise in incidents resulting in APD calls to the property.
- Altercations between various groups that emanate at this location and then disperse into the surrounding neighborhood.
- Fights that spill out onto the sidewalk and into the street blocking pedestrians and vehicles.
- Concerns with the management of the property.

I will also note, that separate from this proceeding, Albany Police Chief Eric Hawkins has already made a finding that a nuisance exists at 275 Lark Street in accordance with the Public Nuisance Abatement provisions of Article VIII of Chapter 255 of the Albany City Code. Through this proceeding, we're asking the BZA to make the additional finding so that we can proceed to nuisance abatement actions. It is not our desire to see a vacant or shuttered property, but to put in place common sense mitigation mechanisms that will address a very real and serious problem.

Thank you for your consideration of this complaint.