

Suite Ultralounge will stay open -- for now

By Sam Sessa, *Baltimore Sun*, August 25, 2009

The long-awaited ruling from Baltimore Circuit Court judge Kaye A. Allison is in, and the embattled Suite Ultralounge can keep its license -- for now. The Baltimore liquor board didn't have the proper policies in place when it revoked Suite's license last November, Allison ruled.

The liquor board is holding a hearing Sept. 24 to introduce new regulations which officials hope would solve the problem. But it could be as late as November before the city's only bottle club loses its license.

Many violent episodes have been linked to the bottle club in the basement of the Belvedere. And it's unbelievable the club still has its license.

"What a mess," said Councilman William H. Cole IV, who represents the area. "I'm concerned about the delay, but we don't have another choice. Now we just have to hope the liquor board acts swiftly and we'll move from there."

In the meantime, the violence has continued ... At 1:15 a.m. last Friday, Midnight Sun commenter Ryan97ou was walking home from Brewer's Art when he saw a pack of people on the corner of Chase and Charles streets. Then he heard gunfire. Baltimore police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said one man chased another during an argument and fired about 12 shots, but no one appeared to be struck. Ryan97ou, whose real name is Ryan Detter, was appalled.

"It's crazy that it's gotten to this point," Detter said. "It proves the ineptitude of this city when it comes to the legal system." Detter, who has lived in Mount Vernon for four years, is now looking to move elsewhere.

Of course, police couldn't directly link the weapons discharge and Suite Ultralounge. But I would be shocked if the two weren't related. This stretch of Chase Street was relatively quiet before Suite Ultralounge opened.

Last year, officials hastily crafted and passed legislation they hoped would give the liquor board the power to revoke the bottle club's license. But the judge said the legislation wasn't put together properly. So now they've got to go back and write up a new book of rules and regulations they can use to expel Suite Ultralounge.

The new policies should take effect in late September. But the liquor board may not be able to retroactively apply the new policies to the club's old offenses. The club's license comes up for renewal in November. That's a long time from now, considering the club's history of violence.