

Cook County correctional officer owns bar where security guard Jemel Roberson shot by cop, officials say

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FULL TEXT

Nov. 22--A Cook County correctional officer owns the Robbins bar where security guard Jemel Roberson was fatally shot by a Midlothian police officer on Nov. 11, officials said.

Manny's Blue Room Lounge, which does not have a valid state liquor license and had its business license suspended by the village Tuesday, is owned and operated by Nakeea Smith, her lawyer said.

Smith, who also has used the last name Buchanan-Smith and Buchanan, has been a sheriff's office employee since 2003, sheriff's officials said.

Sheriff's officials declined to discuss Smith's status with the department, saying she is the subject of an open internal investigation.

Smith declined to answer questions at the bar's administrative hearing Tuesday night.

Her lawyer Robert McLaughlin also declined comment Tuesday and did not immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

It wasn't immediately clear when Smith took over control of the bar, which for years had been owned and operated by Emanuel Williams.

Williams' company, The New Blue Room Corporation, last held a valid local business license to operate Manny's in April 2016, village officials said.

In July, Robbins issued Luxury US a business license and local liquor license to operate Manny's, 2911 S. Claire Blvd., according to village officials.

Nakeea Buchanan-Smith is the president of Luxury Us, according to articles of incorporation filed with the secretary of state. Robbins also identified her as the owner of Luxury US and the operator of Manny's in a business license revocation petition.

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Village trustees voted Tuesday to conditionally suspend Manny's business license, rather than revoke it, following an administrative hearing.

In order for Manny's to reopen, the bar's owners must provide the village with all necessary ownership documents; obtain a valid state liquor license; and develop security and operational plans to be reviewed and approved by the Robbins police chief, the board agreed.

The bar does not have a valid state liquor license, which is necessary to serve alcohol, records show. The state liquor license held by the bar's former owners expired on Sept. 30, according to the Illinois Liquor Control Commission.

The Nov. 11 incident that began with shots fired inside the bar and ended with a Midlothian officer shooting Roberson in the bar parking lot was not the first disturbance under the new ownership, records show.

Police responded to a call for reckless discharge of a firearm and a fight in progress on Aug. 12, and to the battery of bar patrons on Oct. 28 and Oct. 30, according to police reports.

The Aug. 12 incident report refers to a bar manager who presented responding officers with a business license

showing that Luxury US was "authorized for lounge activity."

According to that report, the manager told officers seeking footage of the incident that surveillance cameras had been taken down during recent bar remodeling and had not been reconnected. Officers, however, ended up finding a camera above the bar's sign that faces the entrance of the parking lot, the report states. It is not clear, however, whether any footage of the incident was recovered.

Despite the recent police incidents, Manny's has not been cited, fined or reprimanded by the village, McLaughlin argued Tuesday. Robbins officials did not immediately confirm the claim, but also did not rebut it during Tuesday's hearing.

"We're willing to make changes, if necessary," McLaughlin told the board, "but I also want to express that I think my client has done a lot to make sure its business is operating properly within the ordinances of Robbins, to the liking of this panel and the liking of local police enforcement."

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