

# Robbins suspends business license of village bar where Jemel Roberson was shot

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## FULL TEXT

Nov. 21--Robbins suspended the business license of the village bar where a Midlothian police officer fatally shot security guard Jemel Roberson on Nov. 11.

Following an administrative hearing Tuesday, the village board voted unanimously to suspend the business license of Manny's Blue Room, 2911 S. Claire Blvd., until three conditions recommended by the village attorney are met.

The bar's owners, Luxury US, Inc., 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 before it can reopen, the board agreed.

Robert McLaughlin, an attorney for the bar's owners, said he considered the conditions "fair and reasonable," and something he could work on with the village.

McLaughlin and his client, Nakeea Smith, who he said was Manny's owner/operator, declined comment after the hearing.

Robbins issued a business license and local liquor license to Luxury US in July, according to a petition for revocation that village administrator Keith Freeman presented Tuesday.

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Luxury US, secretary of state records show, is registered to Nakeeh Buchanan-Smith and has a Riverdale address. 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 as he held a suspected bar shooter at gunpoint was not the first disturbance under the new ownership, Freeman said.

Police responded to a call for reckless discharge of a firearm and a fight in progress on Aug. 12, and to the assault and battery of a bar patron on Oct. 28, according to his petition. There also had been incidents where police responded to the bar prior to the current ownership, he said.

McLaughlin argued that Manny's had not been cited, fined or reprimanded in any way for the prior incidents, and thus the revocation of its business license was not warranted.

Residents also spoke favorably on the bar's behalf, with one woman calling it a community "outlet."

"It's not only a black business that has been around for years, but it's also an outlet to a lot of us," said Latoya Sims, who claimed security at Manny's has improved under new ownership.

"It used to be worse. I refused to go up in there prior because it wasn't secure enough," Sims said. "But now, it's secure to me. I feel safe in there because he has made a plan, he has done what he was supposed to do. He's done his due diligence to bring in security for the patrons that like to actually go in there and use it as an outlet."

Darrell Mitchell, another village resident, said officials needed to consider the economic impact that shutting down a local business would have on Robbins.

"We want to make sure that we're not shutting down businesses that are bringing in revenue," he said. "We know that a loss of any business will be a loss of property tax revenue, sales tax revenue, payroll revenue and these are things that we need in this village."

zkoeske@tribpub.com

CREDIT: By Zak Koeske

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