

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD
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MEETING

IN THE MATTER OF:

Tribute to Skip Coburn

April 8, 2015

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board met in the Alcoholic Beverage Control Hearing Room, Reeves Building, 2000 14th Street, N.W., Suite 400S, Washington, D.C. 20009, Chairperson Ruthanne Miller, presiding.

PRESENT:

RUTHANNE MILLER, Chairperson
DONALD BROOKS, Member
MIKE SILVERSTEIN, Member
HECTOR RODRIGUEZ, Member
JAMES SHORT, Member

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

10:15 a.m.

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2
3 CHAIRPERSON MILLER: And our next
4 hearing will be our Fact-Finding Hearing on The
5 Country Vintner. We just want to take a few
6 minutes for a special guest who is here and would
7 like to say a few words. Mr. Smith?

8 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON MILLER: Thank you.

10 MEMBER SILVERSTEIN: Identify
11 yourself.

12 MR. SMITH: Madam Chair, Board, thanks
13 for allowing me a couple of minutes to come in
14 here to mention this.

15 We have a training setup and it just
16 worked out perfectly for us, while we are in
17 town, to mention the passing of Skip Coburn on
18 the record.

19 As many of you know, you know well
20 more than I do, Skip was quirky, but I'm telling
21 you I have worked with 32 ABC Boards around the
22 country. I have trained them. I have helped

1 them hire the right people. I have helped them
2 write reports. And I have never seen anyone as
3 tirelessly busy to help the little guy get a
4 patio cafe, the big guy reopen when they are
5 making a million ganglions. Skip was there
6 charging a very low rate to get them reopened to
7 present professionally in front of you.

8 I saw him help rooftop places that
9 weren't rooftops become vibrant meeting places
10 for the afternoon and evenings. Music permits,
11 patio cafes, restaurant to nightclub, it didn't
12 matter, Skip was there to fight.

13 Sometimes argumentative, sometimes
14 very opinionated, but as a 20-year veteran San
15 Diego Police Officer, when you meet a community
16 servant as Skip was with the background he had, I
17 don't think I can think of another one that
18 fought as hard for people that he really didn't
19 know, other than they help the community of D.C.
20 have a better nightlife, a better day-life, a
21 better weekend-life and Skip was always there for
22 them.

1 Skip and I were business
2 acquaintances. We never had a business
3 relationship through D.C. Nightlife other than
4 him believing in our training program. He
5 attended over 12 of our programs. He was an
6 advocate for what we do in keeping bars safer and
7 nightclubs safer.

8 And I just wanted to put on record
9 that I think not only will the Board, as quirky
10 as he was, miss some of his discussions and
11 statements about facts of law or changing
12 regulations, I really believe that the community
13 of D.C. has lost someone that was a champion for
14 their cause in creating a safer nightlife.

15 And I feel sorry for the people that
16 are new in the industry in D.C. that will never
17 get a chance to have him fight for them. He
18 wasn't an attorney, but he was as tenacious as
19 one in fighting for these operators.

20 And that's all I wanted to say.

21 CHAIRPERSON MILLER: Thank you. Let
22 me just say I don't know if you said who you were

1 on the record.

2 MR. SMITH: I'm sorry.

3 CHAIRPERSON MILLER: No, it would be
4 good to have on the record, since you gave this
5 beautiful tribute to Mr. Coburn.

6 MR. SMITH: My name is Robert Charles
7 Smith.

8 CHAIRPERSON MILLER: Okay.

9 MR. SMITH: I'm the CEO and President
10 of Nightclub Security Consultants in San Diego.
11 We have been training here for eight and a half
12 years, again, many D.C. Nightlife clients,
13 restaurant association, Metro D.C. clients,
14 clients in between.

15 And again, Skip met me at one of the
16 meetings we did. He wanted to attend a program
17 to vet it and attended more than 12 over the
18 years. So thank you very much again.

19 CHAIRPERSON MILLER: You're welcome.
20 Thank you for asking. No, you don't have to go
21 yet, because I think a few Board Members might
22 want to say something and you might want to hear

1 it. All right. Mr. Silverstein?

2 MEMBER SILVERSTEIN: Madam Chair, I
3 would like to thank Mr. Smith for coming here and
4 I would like to echo his remarks and add to them.

5 I knew Skip Coburn and Skip was -- his
6 life was best described as service. He was born
7 overseas in Europe. Educated at an American
8 school in Paris and in Switzerland, because his
9 parents were overseas during his childhood
10 serving the United States of America.

11 Skip joined the military, was a
12 fighter pilot in the United States Air Force,
13 served in Vietnam and retired as a lieutenant
14 colonel.

15 Most of us knew nothing of his history
16 of service, because he did not boast about it.
17 As most heros, they are quiet.

18 He came state-side and service
19 continued on a neighborhood level. He became
20 involved in matters of helping small businesses
21 and often these matters, as you pointed out, Mr.
22 Smith, can be quite contentious between neighbors

1 and people who want to put a business in an area
2 where they are basically on top of each other and
3 accommodations have to be made on both sides so
4 that we can all peacefully coexist.

5 In these matters, Skip was considered
6 to be an honest broker. He had one mouth and two
7 ears and he did more listening than talking,
8 which is one of the rarest things you will find
9 in the city. I thought it was telling that some
10 of the people who are the biggest advocates of
11 peace, order and quiet in our neighborhood and in
12 Dupont Circle were among those who were the first
13 to express their shock and sadness that Skip had
14 died, because he was considered a true friend to
15 all of those who were trying to find solutions
16 and make the city better.

17 And his life was one of service and he
18 was a good and decent and a kind man and we will
19 miss him. Thank you, sir.

20 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON MILLER: Thank you. Mr.
22 Rodriguez?

1 MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Madam Chairman and
2 Members of the Board, ladies and gentlemen, I am
3 new on this Board. And I had the opportunity to
4 meet Mr. Coburn and I was very impressed with his
5 enthusiasm, his infectious positive approach to
6 things. And as a veteran, I am very proud and
7 pleased to the service that he provided this
8 Board and our community and I want to second the
9 statements that you have said about him.

10 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON MILLER: Anyone else?
12 Before you go, no, I just want to close really
13 and say I really do appreciate your coming.
14 There will be a service for Mr. Coburn. It's
15 very nice to pay a little tribute in our own
16 boardroom, because he played a good part here.
17 He was a good person and a good advocate for the
18 city and we will miss him. Thank you.

19 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON MILLER: Okay.

21 (Whereupon, the Skip Coburn Tribute
22 was concluded at 10:33 a.m.)

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