



# Braddock Metro Citizens' Coalition

Working for a Greater Northwest Old Town | [www.braddockmetro.org](http://www.braddockmetro.org)

1122 Madison Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 | [bmcc@braddockmetro.org](mailto:bmcc@braddockmetro.org)

October 30, 2015

Alexandria Planning Commission

Additional Materials

SUP2015-0092

Mason Social

RE: November 5, 2015, Docket Item #7 – SUP #2015-0092, Encroachment 2015-0004

Dear Chairwoman Lyman and Members of the Commission:

The Braddock Metro Citizens' Coalition (BMCC) would like to offer formal comment on the proposal before you November 5, 2015 regarding rooftop dining for Mason Social, located at 728 North Henry Street. The applicant asks to add rooftop dining to their existing establishment which will also require both a parking reduction and a public right-of-way encroachment. The BMCC, the civic association where Mason Social is located in the Braddock neighborhood, is in favor of all three aspects of the application.

First, the applicant's reasoning for requesting rooftop dining is that other restaurants in this area, including Lost Dog Café, Bastille, and Dos Amigos, all have outdoor dining which is very well used when the weather is cooperative. Mason Social feels it gives them an advantage during seasonable weather. They feel they need to make this investment to remain competitive. We agree and would note that when the weather is nice, all the outdoor dining in the neighborhood is often fully utilized.

In order to access the roof, the applicant's architect has developed a concept design featuring two stairs running up the north façade along Madison Street, behind a full height screen wall. We think this is an appropriate treatment for the exterior stairs on this building. The encroachment on the sidewalk is minimal and will not have an appreciable impact on pedestrian traffic.

We also support the parking reduction because the applicant has developed an agreement with a retail business across Henry Street to utilize their large parking lot during the hours they are not open. We applaud this arrangement and would encourage it in other locations across the city. This sharing of day-time retail parking and evening/weekend entertainment parking maximizes limited land resources. In a transit-oriented, dense neighborhood like ours, surface parking is not a good land use but it makes more sense when the hours of use are doubled by complimentary businesses.

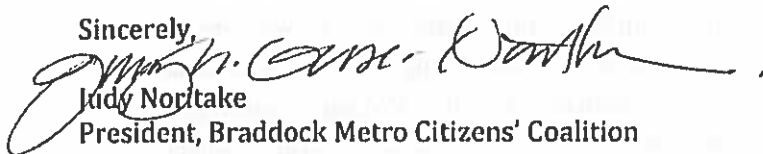
The applicant has substantially modified the request that was first filed after meeting with our civic association and a number of the nearby neighbors on several occasions. They now propose a total of 49 occupants on the roof deck, screening on the south and east side developed with thought to some noise dampening, and no amplified sound or live music at any time. They have requested the hours of operation to be until 10:00 PM Sunday through Thursday and then midnight on Friday and Saturday. While midnight on weekends is longer than some other restaurants in the area, we support that time. The owner indicated that the additional hour was important to the success of the roof top operation and the investment it will require. It should be noted that their 10:00 PM roof top closing on the five weeknights is at least an hour earlier than most, but not all, of the other nearby bars and restaurants.

Mason Social has indicated that if the '*midnight on weekends*' provision is granted that they will welcome a revisit of it by the Planning Commission at the end of the first outdoor operating season, about this time next year. We think that is a good idea. They have also supplied the BMCC and nearby neighbors with their personal contact information so issues of noise, etc., can be addressed as they occur rather than waiting for a formal review. We would also note that for the 10 months they have been in operation there have not been any noise complaints of which we are aware.

Given recent challenges in this rapidly developing Braddock neighborhood, we welcome more people, more vibrancy and more eyes on the street late into the evening, especially on weekends. With vibrancy comes safety. For this, and the reasons outlined above, we urge you to approve the applicant's request, including midnight operating hours on Friday and Saturdays.

The BMCC asks that you support the rooftop dining at Mason Social and grant the necessary approvals to accomplish this project. We welcome it in our neighborhood.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judy Noritake', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Judy Noritake

President, Braddock Metro Citizens' Coalition

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**From:** Alex Dambach  
**Sent:** Friday, October 30, 2015 1:04 PM  
**To:** Kristen Walentisch; Kendra Jacobs  
**Subject:** Fwd: Docket #2015-0092 Mason Social

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Alex Dambach, AICP  
Division Chief - Land Use Services  
City of Alexandria  
301 King Street, Rm 2100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Office: 703-746-3829  
Mobile: 571-393-7339

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Salena Zellers <[salena\\_zellers@yahoo.com](mailto:salena_zellers@yahoo.com)>  
**Date:** October 30, 2015 at 12:50:57 PM EDT  
**To:** "[plancomm@alexandriava.gov](mailto:plancomm@alexandriava.gov)" <[plancomm@alexandriava.gov](mailto:plancomm@alexandriava.gov)>, Karl Moritz <[karl.moritz@alexandriava.gov](mailto:karl.moritz@alexandriava.gov)>, Alex Dambach <[alex.dambach@alexandriava.gov](mailto:alex.dambach@alexandriava.gov)>, "[peter.leiberg@alexandriava.gov](mailto:peter.leiberg@alexandriava.gov)" <[peter.leiberg@alexandriava.gov](mailto:peter.leiberg@alexandriava.gov)>  
**Cc:** Justin Sparrow <[justin@mason-social.com](mailto:justin@mason-social.com)>, Chad Sparrow <[chad@mason-social.com](mailto:chad@mason-social.com)>, "[larry@mason-social.com](mailto:larry@mason-social.com)" <[larry@mason-social.com](mailto:larry@mason-social.com)>, Mary Catherine Gibbs <[mcg.hcgk@verizon.net](mailto:mcg.hcgk@verizon.net)>, HOA BraddockLofts <[braddockloftshoa@gmail.com](mailto:braddockloftshoa@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Docket #2015-0092 Mason Social  
**Reply-To:** Salena Zellers <[salena\\_zellers@yahoo.com](mailto:salena_zellers@yahoo.com)>

DOCKET ITEM #7  
Special Use Permit #2015-0092  
Encroachment #2015-0004 728  
N. Henry Street – Mason Social, LLC

Chairwoman Lyman and Members of City Planning Commission,

I am writing to express my support for the addition of outdoor rooftop dining at Mason Social. My name is Salena Zellers and I live in the Braddock Lofts less than 60 steps to the Madison Street entrance of the restaurant. I have a roof top deck that overlooks the area that will be the outdoor seating that Mason Social is proposing.

As some of you may know, the Braddock Metro neighborhood is developing into a vibrant and beautiful area of town. I spent many years working on the planning for the neighborhood and currently sit on the Braddock Implementation Advisory Group and am a Board member for the

neighborhood association where Mason Social resides, the Braddock Metro Citizens' Coalition. I am not not writing on behalf of any of these groups, I represent only myself as a neighbor and a person involved in the development of our neighborhood since 2003.

My neighbors and I have readily welcomed the new development and the fabulous retail that has come along with it. The Planning Commissioners have been an integral part of the success of our neighborhood and we invite you over to our side of town to visit one of our great restaurants that opened this year.

We see Mason Social as a critical addition to the neighborhood, offering evening activity and additional eyes on the street at night, which is desperately needed here. The owners of Mason Social took an old dilapidated building which used to house a late night karaoke bar and other activities that disrupted our neighborhood every single weekend they were open.

The owners of Mason Social met with me and the other residents of the Braddock Lofts on several occasions to discuss their plans for rooftop dining and have changed their requested hours based on our concerns for late night noise. While Staff is recommending approval for weekend hours to end at 11pm, I stand in support of closing hours on the weekend until midnight. Being in the restaurant business in a former life, I understand the critical need for later hours at this outdoor space. The owners have assured us that they will address any of our concerns that come up and have given us their direct contact information to do so.

As a next door neighbor of Mason Social, I ask you to support their application for rooftop dining with weekend hours extending until 12 am. Thank you!

Salena Zellers  
1122 Madison Street

## November 5, 2015 Item #7 SUP #2015-0092

Ginger Court <gingcourt@gmail.com>

Tue 11/3/2015 8:16 PM

Inbox

To PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>;

Cc Peter Courtney <pcourt@pobox.com>;

Dear Planning Commission,

As homeowners at 720 N Henry St, my husband and I would like to express our thoughts on the requested Special Use Permit #2015-0092 submitted by Mason Social. It will be item #7 during the Thursday, November 5th meeting. We live approximately 60 feet from Mason Social. Although we remain concerned about the noise a roof top deck might bring to the neighborhood, we are glad that the Mason Social's owners have reached out to engage with their neighbors.

We are supportive of the Special Use Permit (SUP) if the final SUP contains these provisions

1. Closing hours of 10 pm on weekdays
2. No amplified sound on the deck

There appears to be some discussion regarding weekend closing hours. While we would prefer 11 pm, we understand the realities of the hospitality business and can live with a midnight closing time on the weekends. This is with the understanding that "last call" would be well prior to the 10 pm and midnight times with the expectation that there would be no patrons on the roof deck after these hours. And we would hope that the Mason Social staff would be respectful of their neighbors as they clean up and break down the roof top deck.

We would also appreciate a one-season provisional / trial period with final approval based on how compatible the roof top deck is within a residential neighborhood. We lived in our home when Esmeralda's was open in this location and the noise from amplified music inside the venue could be heard through our walls. We are in favor of development within our neighborhood, but believe it should be done responsibly and not to the detriment of the current residents.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Ginger & Peter Courtney

(412) 417-5457

720 N Henry St, Alexandria, VA 22314

# Mason Social Rooftop Hours

Lauren O'Brien <lobrien@laramayllc.com>

Mon 11/2/2015 1:26 PM

To PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>;

Hi,

I live in the EYA development at 815 N Patrick St, about one block from Mason Social. It was a real treat to have Mason Social open earlier in 2015, and they – along with other recent retailers – have really enhanced the development of our Parker Gray neighborhood area. The staff at Mason Social are very pleasant, always remembering neighbors and wanting to get to know everyone; they do an excellent job executing their intention of being a local, neighborhood spot.

I'm looking forward to the development of the Mason Social rooftop. I am in support of the requested hours extension on Fridays and Saturdays till midnight. I understand that the staff are willing to revisit after a season how the rooftop has gone and review any complaints or feedback. I think that's an excellent approach.

I encourage the planning commission to move forward with the requested hours.

Cheers,  
Lauren O'Brien

**Lauren O'Brien, CFP<sup>®</sup>, CPA** | Vice President, Wealth Management  
703.761.3902 Direct  
lobrien@laramayllc.com

**Lara, May & Associates, LLC**  
7600 Leesburg Pike  
Suite 120 East  
Falls Church, VA 22043  
703.827.2300 Main  
571.405.3880 Fax  
www.laramayllc.com

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# Docket #2015-0092 Mason Social

Jennifer Lachman <jennifer.lachman@gmail.com>

Mon 11/2/2015 9:31 AM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>;

Cc: Villar, John <John.Villar@capitalone.com>;

## DOCKET ITEM #7

Special Use Permit #2015-0092

Encroachment #2015-0004 728

N. Henry Street – Mason Social, LLC

Chairwoman Lyman and Members of City Planning Commission,

My name is Jen Lachman, and my husband John Villar and I live in the Braddock Lofts, just several doors down from Mason Social on N. Henry Street.

Mason Social is a welcome addition to our developing neighborhood. When we learned of their plans to develop a roof top terrace, we had several immediate questions and concerns, primarily regarding noise. Noise travels very easily in the concrete jungle behind our house. We hear the kids at the Day Care as clear as day, and when Esmerelda's was in operation we were often awoken by their patrons leaving or their employees dumping the beer bottles in the middle of the night.

I am pleased to say that we have had several productive meetings with Justin Sparrow, co-owner of Mason Social, to voice our requests. I would like to take this opportunity to voice the same requests to the Planning Commission as you consider their SUP on Thursday. We would like to see:

- Rooftop hours restricted to **10:00 p.m. on week nights (Sundays-Thursdays) and 11:00 p.m. on Fridays & Saturdays**, which I understand is in line with Staff's recommendation.
- Require some sort of **structure to help buffer the noise** (we discussed the idea of a green wall with Justin)
- **Restrict amplified music** and TV noise.
- 
- As a condition of approval, **Planning Commission should revisit these hours and operations** after the first 3 months of business, and again after the following season to see if any requirements need to be adjusted.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these requests.

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Best regards,

Jen Lachman and John Villar  
714 N. Henry St.

## SUP #2015-0092

Kelly Vontz <kellyvontz@gmail.com>

Wed 10/28/2015 6:56 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>;

Hello!

We live in the Westover neighborhood and would like to see Mason Social have roof top dining. They have proven themselves to be great neighbors and a welcome addition to the neighborhood with their delicious food! We also appreciate that they have added some much needed curb appeal by beautifying the formally run down property. We have seen this neighborhood positively transform itself in the 13 years we have lived here and think this will continue to enhance the area.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our opinion!  
Kelly and Chris Vontz



# FW: Mason Social Rooftop Deck

Alex Dambach

Mon 10/19/2015 3:15 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>;

Alex Dambach, AICP  
Division Chief – Land Use Services  
City of Alexandria  
301 King Street, Rm 2100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Office: 703-746-3829  
Mobile: 571-393-7339  
[alex.dambach@alexandriava.gov](mailto:alex.dambach@alexandriava.gov)  
[www.alexandriava.gov](http://www.alexandriava.gov)

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**From:** Mary Catherine Gibbs [mailto:mcg.hcgk@verizon.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, October 19, 2015 3:11 PM  
**To:** Alex Dambach  
**Cc:** 'Justin Sparrow'  
**Subject:** Mason Social Rooftop Deck

Alex,

On behalf of the applicant, this email is written to formally change the requested hours of operation for the proposed rooftop deck at Mason Social to a closing hour of ten p.m. on weeknights and midnight on weekends.

The applicant would also be willing to accept an expedited review condition, with community input, after the rooftop operation has been open for its first season. Construction will take place this Winter with a proposed opening in the Spring, so a review in late October 2016 might be appropriate.

Thanks in advance, Mary Catherine Gibbs

Hart, Calley, Gibbs & Karp, P.C.  
307 N. Washington Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
(703) 836-5757 (phone)

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**Kay Chewing**  
**716 N. Henry Street, Alexandria, VA 22314**

November 1, 2015

Members of the Alexandria Virginia  
Planning Commission  
[PlanComm@alexandriava.gov](mailto:PlanComm@alexandriava.gov)

**RE: SUP 2015-0092 – Mason Social – Addition of Rooftop Dining & Bar**

Dear Members of the Planning Commission:

Exciting things are happening in the Parker Gray district! It's a great time to live here.

In advance of the upcoming Planning Commission meeting on November 5<sup>th</sup>, I wanted to take this opportunity to voice a few concerns regarding Mason Social's request to add a rooftop bar and dining component to their current location.

I live just 4 doors down from Mason Social on N. Henry Street. I really enjoy dining there and feel that, except for a few very minor nuisances (trash on our front stoops and delivery truck noise), they are a great addition to our growing and transforming neighborhood.

**I look forward to the addition of the rooftop bar and dining area.**

**However, I do want to strongly voice my concerns about potential noise and the late hours proposed.**

As I understand it, their current SUP states that they anticipate having **up to 100 people on the roof** depending on the day/night, and they are asking to be able to have rooftop hours until **12:00 a.m.** Mon-Wed, **2:00 a.m.** Thurs-Sat, and **11:00 p.m.** on Sunday.

As you know, the property is surrounded on all sides by **residential units** (Belle Pre, Braddock Lofts, and ARHA's Bland & Atkins). You are probably also aware that most of the structures on the block are fairly industrial in their style, thereby creating a "concrete canyon" that echoes immensely.

This is evidenced by the Madison Daycare facility, whose joyous giggles and exuberant shrieks and screams bounce off the outside walls of their playground and carry to our nearby residences with great amplification. However, these are daytime noises and for the most part, a joy to hear instead of a problem.

**Kay Chewning**  
**716 N. Henry Street, Alexandria, VA 22314**

By contrast, 100 people on an open-air rooftop until 11:00 p.m., 12:00 a.m. and 2:00 a.m. could greatly impact the evening routines of the neighboring residents, many of whom rise early to head to school and jobs. Some of my immediate neighbors typically get up at 4:30 a.m. I generally am up at 5:30. Some of us work weekends. So to be kept awake by clanking dishes, clearing tables, shuttling empty bottles, swelling voices cheering a football game, or other revelry, could have a direct impact on our quality of life.

Speaking from experience, (I have lived on the block for 14 years), when the prior occupant, Esmeralda's, finally closed, our quality of life went up significantly.

Prior to their closing, we were consistently jolted awake at 3:00-4:00 a.m. as they emptied 100's of empty bottles in the dumpster after a busy night. We went from pulling 10 – 20 Carona bottles out of our landscaping each weekend morning, and calling the police due to drunken and disorderly conduct and noise violations at all hours of the night, to a peaceful time where we could actually sleep with our windows open on occasion in the spring and fall.

Gone were the weekend nights where people sat in their cars in front of our homes on Rt. 1 and drank until they were in a stupor. Gone are the days where there were bicycles chained out front of our homes because several of their patrons could no longer drive to the bar, so they rode their bikes. Only to be so drunk they couldn't even ride their bikes home and thus left them chained for days.

To date, we have not encountered any of these problems with Mason Social. Esmeralda's was a "worst case scenario, but that is the reason I am particularly concerned about the noise and hours of the roof-top bar/restaurant.

Many of us moved here because we like an urban environment, so we don't expect complete silence, but I do want to make sure that the City contemplates a few **reasonable** items as outlined below when making your recommendations:

- Restrict rooftop hours to **10:00 p.m. on school nights** (Sundays-Thursdays)
- Restrict rooftop hours to **11:00 p.m. on Fridays & Saturdays** (patrons can move inside after 11:00).
- Require some sort of soft **screening** on the rooftop sides of the structure to help buffer the noise (this could be mesh "green" walls with climbing greenery, a pergola with side draperies, rooftop plants and soft surfaces to help absorb and mitigate echoing noises.
- Require **rooftop umbrellas, sail-cloths, or canopies** overhead to better contain the noise from rising up.

**Kay Chewning**  
**716 N. Henry Street, Alexandria, VA 22314**

- **Restrict amplified music** and TV noise.
- Recommend a plan for emptying bottles and clearing the rooftop after closing to minimize **after-hours clean-up noise**. (Will there be "dumb-waiters" or will the wait-staff be required to carry all plates & glassware up and down the exterior stairwell?)
- As a condition of approval, **Planning Commission should revisit these hours and operations** after the first 3 months of business, and again after the following season to see if any requirements need to be adjusted.
- Make sure Mason Social coaches their **staff and parking attendants to adhere to quiet conduct** as they park cars across Rt. 1 in the Alexandria Lighting company lot. (no yelling or blowing whistles to signal cars are ready, etc.) Again, this lot is directly across from the residential townhouses.
- Create a **designated smoking area** for workers and patrons so they do not sit on our front stoops leaving cigarette butts or have late-night voices in front of our homes.
- Ensure there are plenty of **trash receptacles** on all corners of the Mason Social building and ensure they are emptied frequently. Route 1 has a chronic problem with street trash that has only gotten worse as the new retailers have joined the community.

In closing, I am looking forward to the new rooftop and think it will be a fun addition. However, I hope you will strongly consider the issues of **noise attenuation** and **late-night hours** when you make your recommendations to City Council.

Attached are a few ideas of possible screening for roof top bars. They may not be structurally feasible, but perhaps some elements could be incorporated to help contain the sound at night. Hopefully, Mason Social can get creative and figure out some solutions so this can be a "win-win" for the neighborhood and the Restaurant/Bar.

Thank you in advance. I'm looking forward to this new addition to our block.

Kay Chewning  
[Chewningkk@aol.com](mailto:Chewningkk@aol.com)

**Kay Chewing**  
716 N. Henry Street, Alexandria, VA 22314





**Kay Chewing**  
716 N. Henry Street, Alexandria, VA 22314



# SUP #2015-0092 - Mason Social

Dak Hardwick <dakhardwick@gmail.com>

Wed 11/4/2015 5:20 PM

Inbox

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>;

Members of the Planning Commission -

I write in support for Mason Social's request for extended hours for their proposed roof deck operation. Mason Social is a new entrant into the North Old town neighborhood and has been a very positive addition to that part of Alexandria. I have personally dined at Mason Social and find the restaurant to be a terrific place to gather with friends.

I'd like to make a specific note about the request for extended hours at Mason Social on a roof deck. As Alexandria continues to evolve into a city known for terrific food and drink establishments, requests for rooftop dining and extended hours are naturally going to increase. The approval of Mason Social's request for this type of operation would send a very strong signal regionally that Alexandria is welcoming of establishments and operations like this. Your support of this request would be very business friendly and would continue to make Alexandria competitive with neighboring jurisdictions.

Thank you for the consideration of my support and best wishes for a productive meeting.

Best regards,

Dak Hardwick  
5181 Brawner Place  
Alexandria

Dak Hardwick  
Mobile: 571-215-3008  
[dakhardwick@gmail.com](mailto:dakhardwick@gmail.com)  
Twitter: @DakHardwick