

**From:** Kathy [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2022 1:57 PM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** Alcohol permit

I oppose the transfer of the alcohol permit to Lowell Sheldon owner of Piala restaurant on Healdsburg Ave in Sebastopol Ca.

Sent from my iPhone

June 1, 2022

City of Sebastopol  
Planning Director  
Planning Commission  
7120 Bodega Avenue  
Sebastopol, CA 95472

**RE: Reject Applicant's Appeal of Denial of Alcohol Transfer and Alcohol Use Permit  
Application, File 2022-020, Piala LLC**

Dear Commissioners and Planning Director:

Please consider my following comments, and uphold the position of the City of Sebastopol Planning Department staff to **deny an Alcohol Transfer and Alcohol Use Permit** at 7233 Healdsburg Avenue.

While the Applicant, Mr. Lowell Sheldon, is entitled to his own opinions regarding this denial, he is not entitled to his own set of facts.

Mr. Sheldon suggests that he "ran (his) first restaurant in a way that was sloppy and made some of (his) employees uncomfortable...". In fact, most of these employees allege, particularly in the context of alcohol use, "repeated instances of sexual harassment, assault and other inappropriate behavior", and as partners in one business venture after another demanded Mr. Sheldon's separation from their partnerships due to "his pattern of sexual harassment" (*Press Democrat 9/25/21*), Mr. Sheldon has, in fact, repeatedly described this behavior as simply "making people feel uncomfortable".

Mr. Sheldon states that his well-documented behavior "did not meet the standards of today". In fact, "repeated instances of sexual harassment, assault and other inappropriate behavior" were never acceptable standards, now or in the past.

Mr. Sheldon states that he will not be "an operational partner", with the implication that his alleged and documented persistent unprofessional, illegal and abusive behaviors thus cannot impact the community. In fact, Mr. Sheldon is identified as the owner who has applied for the Alcohol Transfer and Alcohol Use Permit, and will most certainly be present at times at the proposed business. Further, even if it were possible, the City should not consider conditioning approval of this proposed project with unenforceable criteria such as not allowing the owner to enter his own property, in an attempt to mitigate Mr. Sheldon's long-standing history and behavior surrounding alcohol.

In a recent letter to select individuals, Mr. Sheldon stated that "3 former employees (and some of their friends who do not know me)" requested denial of "a change of ownership application". In fact, the many letters known to me from concerned stakeholders and members of the community to the City of Sebastopol and the California Department of Alcohol Beverage Control were largely in protest of approval for a license to permit Mr. Sheldon to engage in the sale and service of alcohol.

Mr. Sheldon opines that "a citizen should not be blocked from opening a restaurant serving beer and wine because former employees demand as much". In fact, Mr. Sheldon was denied approval by the City of Sebastopol because of "a history of inappropriate behavior in the workplace" and "the proposed use is not a restaurant, but rather a bar, which requires a Conditional Use Permit review by the Planning

Commission, and also has different parking requirements attendant thereto” (*City of Sebastopol Planning Department, May 4, 2022*).

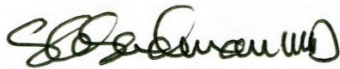
There is abundant evidence, carefully considered by the City of Sebastopol in the Findings for Denial, File 2022-020, “that, given the specifics of this case, the issuance of a Use Permit would be detrimental to the health, safety, peace, morals, comfort, or general welfare of persons residing or working in the area.” As asserted by the City of Sebastopol Planning Director, there is, in fact, “a history of inappropriate behavior by the proposed owner within and outside of the workplace in several establishments within Sebastopol and the immediate area.”

It appears that for at least a decade, Mr. Sheldon engaged in extensively documented behavior involving alcohol for which, in fact, a dozen women have come forward to provide detailed history alleging “repeated instances of sexual harassment, assault and other inappropriate behavior” as well as “unprofessional behavior” such as the service of alcohol to minors. While there exists, in fact, an abundance of evidence to suggest the veracity of these allegations, there is no compelling evidence to suggest that this pattern of behavior did not exist, has changed, or ever will change.

**There is no justifiable reason or verifiable evidence to suggest that the Denial of the Alcohol Transfer and Alcohol Use Permit application at 7233 Healdsburg Avenue should be reversed.**

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Seidman". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Scott Seidman, M.D., F.A.C.E.P.  
Freestone, 95472 CA

cc: Kari Svanstrom  
ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org

**From:** Kari Svanstrom  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2022 1:32 PM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** FW: Peter Lowell

-----Original Message-----

From: Simon Lowings [REDACTED]  
Sent: Friday, June 24, 2022 11:41 AM  
To: Kari Svanstrom <[ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org](mailto:ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org)>  
Subject: Peter Lowell

Hi As residents at [REDACTED] we support Peter Lowells application for a liquor license for a new restaurant on Healdsburg Avenue. We see no reason why it should be denied. Best wishes Simon and Anne Lowings.

**From:** Kari Svanstrom  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2022 1:31 PM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** FW: PUBLIC COMMENT: Alcohol license, Piala LLC (7233 Healdsburg Ave)

Kari Svanstrom  
Planning Director

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**From:** Ray Gonzales [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 23, 2022 12:26 PM  
**To:** Kari Svanstrom <[ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org](mailto:ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org)>  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT: Alcohol license, Piala LLC (7233 Healdsburg Ave)

Hello,

My name is Ray Gonzales & I'm a resident in Sebastopol, Ca. I'm in support of your denial of the alcohol license for Piala llc. Lowell Sheldon has a well documented, heavily reported history of sexual harassment, assault, worker abuse, and endangering minors as an employer. Abuse of alcohol and illegal drugs were involved in the majority of these allegations. Lowell Sheldon has shown repeatedly that he lacks the professional and moral character to be allowed to operate an alcohol-related business. He has denied many of the allegations Over 750 concerned citizens [signed the petition](#) demanding not only that Sheldon be removed from the Freestone Hotel project, but also that he not be granted an alcohol license for future endeavors. Our community has spoken.

I want to live in a community that supports women, workers, and survivors of sexual violence. I want my two daughters to grow up in this type of community. No action taken here will impact what I do with my businesses in this area & where I spend my dollar. I want Sebasotpol to thrive. Let's not be known for supporting this type of behavior; it will only further stain our community.

Denying an alcohol license is an appropriate consequence for someone who has a 10+ year heavily documented history of sexual assault, harassment, and workplace abuse involving alcohol.

Thank you for listening & look forward to the right action being taken to address this.

Ray Gonzales  
[REDACTED] Sebastopol, CA 95472  
[REDACTED]

**From:** Kari Svanstrom  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2022 1:33 PM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** FW: public comment on Lowell Sheldon case

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**From:** Zoe Kessler [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, June 24, 2022 3:41 PM  
**To:** Kari Svanstrom <[ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org](mailto:ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org)>  
**Subject:** public comment on Lowell Sheldon case

Hello my name is Zoe Kessler. I am a long time sonoma county resident. I would like to add my public comment on the topic of not allowing Lowell Sheldon to own a business or participate in any commerce in Sonoma County. For years Lowell has been a known predator in this area. Many many of my friends and family have reported him as an unsafe and dangerous person. I personally have been a patron at his restaurants and have been made very uncomfortable by him. One night in particular I was sitting at the bar at Lowell's establishment, eating dinner and he was very drunk and kept coming over to me and putting his arm around me and breathing very heavily on me. he has repeatedly tried to insight flirtation with me and each time I have turned him down or completely ignored him, yet he persisted. I never felt comfortable in his presence and especially now hearing other women's stories, I 100 percent support them and we must not let this predator run anymore businesses or give him any sort of power of differential over employees. He is dangerous and should be prosecuted for his crimes. Thank you.

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Zoë Lynne Kessler  
Holistic Practitioner | Self Care Coach | Massage Therapist

"Keeping your body healthy is an expression of gratitude to the whole cosmos, the trees, the clouds, everything." -Thick Nhat Hanh

**From:** Kari Svanstrom  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2022 1:33 PM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** FW: Reject Appeal of Denial of Alcohol Transfer and Alcohol Use Permit Application, File 2022-020  
**Attachments:** [Deny Appeal by Sheldon From Seidman June 1 2022 Freestone.pdf](#)

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**From:** Scott Seidman [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, June 25, 2022 8:50 AM  
**To:** Kari Svanstrom <[ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org](mailto:ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org)>  
**Subject:** Fw: Reject Appeal of Denial of Alcohol Transfer and Alcohol Use Permit Application, File 2022-020

Dear Kari Svanstrom –

After release of the meeting agenda and Staff report for the upcoming June 28th Planning Commission meeting, I noted that my Comment Letter, sent to you via email on June 1st, was missing from the packet. I have attached this email and letter, and request that it be included in the packet.

Cordially,  
Scott Seidman

----- Forwarded Message -----

**From:** Scott Seidman [REDACTED]  
**To:** [ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.com](mailto:ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.com) <[ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.com](mailto:ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 1, 2022 at 12:39:33 PM PDT  
**Subject:** Reject Appeal of Denial of Alcohol Transfer and Alcohol Use Permit Application, File 2022-020

Dear Kari Svanstrom -

Attached please find my comment letter to reject the appeal by the Applicant of the Denial of Alcohol Transfer and Alcohol Use Permit Application, File 2022-020, Piala LLC.

Cordially,  
Scott Seidman

**From:** Kari Svanstrom  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2022 1:34 PM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** FW: Upcoming appeal regarding Piala restaurant

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**From:** Zac Douch [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2022 11:38 AM  
**To:** Debbi Burnes [REDACTED] Fernandez, Evert [REDACTED] Kathy Oetinger [REDACTED]; Kelley, Linda [REDACTED]; Paul Fritz [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Kari Svanstrom <[ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org](mailto:ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org)>  
**Subject:** Upcoming appeal regarding Piala restaurant

Dear Chair Oetinger and Commissioner's,

Only a week away from my position on the commission it is ironic that I am moved to write to you regarding the appeal of the staff decision regarding the Piala application for the transfer of an alcohol use permit.

In reviewing the staff report it is perhaps understandable that Kari had pause for concern in approving this application at a staff level on both counts she cited. Clearly the accusation and indeed the acknowledged behavior of Lowell were deeply troubling. Having re read the press coverage it is clear Mr. Sheldon made significant errors of judgement fueled perhaps by character flaws, an unhealthy power dynamic as well as alcohol and a carefree after hours work culture. It is also clear that his behavior had real impact on some staff members. However it does seem that Mr. Sheldon has made efforts to try to make amends; to acknowledge his poor judgment, to apologize, to do the personal work that is required to make a difference to his own behavior and to how he impacts others. He has remained active in the community when others might have withdrawn under this level of scrutiny and bad press.

On balance I believe the proposed use will *not* adversely affect the health, safety, or welfare of area residents (17.350.020 Paragraph C) and that the applicant has shown that to be the case (17.350.020 Paragraph D) through hiring a HR company and the other steps the applicant has taken. I believe the commission must focus on the *use* not on one individual associated with the use. If you do allow yourselves to focus on one of the partners and deny this use permit based only on reports of misdeeds as opposed to formal investigations/accusations of criminal behavior, we would be in dangerous territory. Perhaps my opinion would be different if there were police reports or a formal investigation was underway, in such circumstance I probably *would* want to await an outcome. But there are none.

Whatever your/our personal views are of Mr. Sheldon, as a commission you should not cast judgment on this individual at the cost of a legitimate business use application but rather focus on the use and the finding as they relate to 17.350.020 and crafting additional condition if deemed necessary to allow this application to move forward.

Respectfully

Zachary Douch

Thank you,  
**Zac Douch**



ZAC DOUCH : VP

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

EARTHSTONE CONSTRUCTION

[REDACTED]

SEBASTOPOL, CALIFORNIA 95472  
[EARTHSTONECONSTRUCTION.COM](http://EARTHSTONECONSTRUCTION.COM)

June 23, 2022

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in support of your denial of the alcohol license for Piala LLC and to urge you to stand firm in your decision, even as Lowell Sheldon appeals it. Lowell Sheldon has a well documented, heavily reported history of sexual harassment, assault, worker abuse, and endangering minors as an employer. Abuse of alcohol and illegal drugs were involved in the majority of these allegations. The denial of an alcohol license is an appropriate consequence for a man who has a well-documented 10+ year history of sexual assault, harassment, and workplace abuse involving alcohol.

My family and I moved to Freestone almost three years ago and feel so lucky to live in such a beautiful place, and also one that prides itself on progressive values and doing things differently than the status quo. We are proud to raise our two young children here. When we first heard of Lowell Sheldon's hotel project just steps from our front door, we were interested, especially since we'd heard of Sheldon and had been to some of his restaurants. But then we started hearing the stories. From neighbors, our hair stylist, people coming by our farm stand. We were told that it was a well known West County secret that Sheldon "made women uncomfortable". We did some research and discovered that some of his employees had quit in protest of his toxic and abusive behavior. After listening to their stories, we knew we could not support any project he was involved in.

When the [SF Chronicle](#) and the [North Bay Bohemian](#) researched and reported on Sheldon's long running and extensive abuse, harassment, and assault of not only his employees but also women in the community, it was heartbreaking to read through the details of what many people we now consider friends have gone through. The bravery they showed in coming forward to publicly state what so many had turned a blind eye to, swept aside, refused to act on, can not be overstated.

Sheldon's other restaurants in Sebastopol all chose to sever ties with him when his vile actions became public. The fact that his three previous businesses saw him as a liability once the public at large was made aware of exactly how Sheldon acted when in a position of power should speak volumes. It would be completely negligent to allow someone with his history to open yet another establishment with alcohol sales given his well documented history of abuse.

He has shown no remorse, both he and his family and friends continue to harass the survivors and their allies. His story has changed many times, but one of the more telling things he's said of late is that he won't be a part of the day to day operations of the business. Why would he need to make that clear? Is it perhaps because he presents a danger to his employees and is not to be trusted around them?

Ultimately, you found his application for a liquor license to be lacking, and I think it's clear you made the right decision. Over 750 concerned members of our community have signed a

petition demanding that Sheldon be removed from his Freestone Hotel project and that he never be allowed to serve alcohol in our community again, due to all of the harm he has caused women and workers in West County. We want to live in a place that protects women and workers from sexual abuse, assault, and harassment, that believes and stands with survivors, and you can do that by upholding your decision to deny Lowell Sheldon a liquor license.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Gleason



Sebastopol

**From:** Jim Haidler <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2022 11:10 AM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** Oppose Peter Lowell liquor license

I oppose granting a liquor license to any operation run by Peter Lowell. He has been shown to be someone of ill repute by many credible sources. His continued participation in businesses of Sebastopol will only enable him to continue his abusive behavior and damage the reputation of this city. Paila is less than a block from my home.

Jim Haidler, [REDACTED] Sebastopol CA 95472

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**From:** Michelle Kelly [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2022 11:35 AM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** Opposition of Alcohol Use Permit for Piala

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the application for a liquor license for Piala, a restaurant associated with Lowell enterprises. I live near the restaurant and am compelled to oppose a liquor license for Piala.

Numerous credible witnesses have outlined a history of sexual harassment and abuse by Lowell in his other restaurants. It's critical to note Lowell's record of sexual harassment targeted his employees who were dependent on income from their jobs. This record of employer abuse does not reflect the values of our community and needs to influence the city's decision as to whether or not to grant a liquor license. I urge you to decline the alcohol use permit based on past employer practice.

Respectfully,  
Dr. Michelle Kelly

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

To:  
City of Sebastopol Commissioners

June 26, 2022

I am writing this letter of support for Lowell Sheldon and Jeff Berlin and their pending restaurant project in Sebastopol called Piala. I am writing because I have known both Jeff Berlin and Lowell Sheldon for many years. I was a wine sales person who saw these men regularly in a professional capacity. Since that time, I have remained friends with both Jeff and Lowell.

I support the project because I think they will bring something of value to Sebastopol with a new venture that showcases food and wine from Georgia. My friends in the area are also very curious and interested in trying this restaurant. And knowing both gentlemen from past restaurant incarnations, their new spot will be a wonderful addition to the Sebastopol community.

I know that Lowell has made some immature and bad decisions in the past regarding his behavior around employees. Yet, I am convinced that he has made efforts to understand the errors of his ways and learned from this experience. He has taken concrete action to change his behaviors.

In addition, it is my understanding that Lowell will not run the establishment but merely design and implement the concept. Jeff Berlin has ample experience in running a restaurant in a professional manner and will bring his expertise to Piala as he has done in past ventures in the Bay Area where I knew him for many years.

You should allow this project to go forward and bring a breath of fresh air to the community by providing another excellent dining choice to our little corner of Sebastopol.

Sincerely,  
Andrea Lederle  
Graton, Ca

**From:** Cari Wynkoop [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 28, 2022 12:04 AM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** Oppose Piala liquor license

Dear Mr. Jay,

I live in the neighborhood directly across from the proposed wine bar, Piala. Cleveland Avenue is a cul-de-sac with a semi-blind hill, connected to the Joe Rodota trail. It is a favorite entryway for walkers, cyclists, and kids.

We have noticed an increase in traffic, high-speed turnarounds, and more parked cars attending the numerous restaurants in the area. There is very limited parking in the lot adjoining Piala. Additionally, the crosswalk connecting our street to the other side of Healdsburg Ave is poorly marked, and without crossing lights.

Despite the applicant's attempt to rebrand Piala as a restaurant, the language on the website (as of 6/27/22) reflects a very wine-forward and bar-focused environment. The hours are also listed as 4:30pm-11pm.

I have children and do not want to see increased traffic, more parking on our street and--most importantly--higher risks of people driving under the influence.

We are also located near the high school, with teenagers regularly walking by and near the proposed site of Piala.

Heightening the concern is the applicant, Lowell Sheldon's, demonstrated lack of responsibility and abuse of managerial power, specifically against young women. Substantiating the claims and causes for concern, Khom Loi (one block away, and the former site of Lowell's) severed ties with Lowell. They were the fourth restaurant to do so.

This is not an appropriate or safe location for a liquor-licensed wine bar.

Cari Wynkoop  
[REDACTED]  
Sebastopol, CA 95472

**From:** Stephen Zollman [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2022 11:46 AM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** Oppose Peter Lowell liquor license

I oppose granting a liquor license to any operation run by Peter Lowell. He has sexually harrassed many of his female employees, this backed by many credible sources. This type of behavior towards women is never acceptable, especially now in light of our Supreme Court's ruling. His continued participation in businesses of Sebastopol will only enable him to continue his abusive behavior and damage the reputation of this city.

Paila is less than a block from my home.

Stephen Zollman, [REDACTED], Sebastopol CA 95472