



NEW HAMPSHIRE – IRELAND TRADE COUNCIL

Department of Business and Economic Affairs
100 North Main Street, Suite 100
Concord, NH 03301

APPROVED Meeting Minutes

Department of Business and Economic Affairs
Kinsman Conference Room
Friday, February 14, 2025
1:30 PM

State Senators

Hon. Regina Birdsell
Hon. Sharon Carson

State Representatives

Hon. Dennis Malloy
Hon. Sherman Packard

Secretary of State

Hon. Steve Shurtleff

Dept. of Business and Economic Affairs

Taylor Caswell
Jeanie Forrester

Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire

Mike Skelton

University System of New Hampshire

Michele Dillon

Public Members

Michael Barrett
*Granite State District
Export Council*

Justin Oslowski
*U.S. Commercial
Service*

Andrea Hechavarria
*NH Life Sciences
Association*

Darragh Madden
Irish Electric

The meeting was called to order at approximately 1:30 p.m. by Chair Sharon Carson.

Present: Sen. Carson, Rep. Malloy, Adam Boltik (for Commissioner Caswell), Jeanie Forrester, Mike Skelton, Michael Barrett, Andrea Hechavarria, Darragh Madden. Guests: E.J. Powers, NH Liquor Commission Chairman, Joe Mollica

Brief introductions of Council Members and guests.

A motion by Rep. Malloy, seconded by Darragh Madden to approve the minutes of January 17, 2025 as written. Unanimous vote.

Presentation by Chairman Mollica with an overview of the NH Liquor Commission followed by a presentation by EJ Powers on the collaboration between the NH Liquor Commission and Bord Bia, the Irish Food Board.

Chairman Mollica:

- NHLC Overview
 - NHLC is celebrating its 90th anniversary
 - Since 1934, generated more than \$4.7 billion for NH’s General Fund – supporting essential state services
 - 65 outlets
 - \$738M sales / \$140M in net profit
 - 12 million annual customers
 - 50% come from outside NH
 - One of 17 control states – recognized as one of the most profitable and progressive
 - Twice named the nation’s top control state
 - Top Ten Retailer the past 6 years
 - Beating out national retailers

- Constant effort to stay on top of trends
 - New Products
 - Events – Wine Week / Distillers Week
 - Convenience
 - New stores – 40 in last decade
 - Curbside / online ordering
 - Sophisticated marketing tactics

- Wine & Spirits Industry
 - Outside forces impacting liquor & wine sales
 - Sales slowing
 - First time in 30 years – IWSR recorded a decline in spirits sold
 - Moderation – health / wellness focus
 - Dry January / Sober October
 - Cannabis
 - More Americans use marijuana daily than alcohol
 - MA - \$6B in revenue since 2018; \$272M in tax revenue in FY24
 - VT - \$130M in sales in FY 24
 - Conflicting Science
 - World Health Org said “no level of alcohol is safe”
 - Tariffs
 - On Mexico, Canada and Europe

- Industry Bright spots – Identifying and optimizing
 - RTD’s
 - Tequila
 - **Irish Whiskey**
 - In 2023, the Irish whiskey category reached **\$1.1 billion** in revenue for distillers.
 - Since 2023, high-end premium and super-premium Irish whiskey grew a staggering **816% and 1,874%** respectively.
 - In FY 2023, Irish whiskey sales at NH Liquor & Wine Outlets reached **\$18.3 million, up 16.1% from the previous year.**

- **New Hampshire is the most Irish state by population (20%)**
 - followed by Massachusetts (19%),

- Rhode Island (17%)
- Vermont (16%)
- and Maine (16%) – all key markets for NH Liquor & Wine Outlet customers

- **Irish Whiskey Investment = A profitable pursuit**

- We are leaning in heavily to this category

Rep. Malloy asked if investment bricks and mortar was paying off and Chair Mollica responded that liquor sales are paying down the bond.

Mike Skelton asked what the Commission was hearing about the industry adapting moving to low alcohol and no alcohol products; Chairman confirmed trends are to population in NH and across the country to drinking less alcohol and they are adapting by introducing a variety of programs, like NH Mocktail Month.

EJ Powers:

Spoke to Council Members about the 2022 spirit of Ireland program, that included a robust training effort to include theatrical performances w/actress, training store employees on Irish whiskey, etc.

NH is the 1st retailer in the country to sell 20 various distillers, craft brands, recently hosted a sold out event which included Consul General as a guest; second phase will include how to enhance the single barrel unique experience. NH representatives went to Ireland to learn about the varieties of whisky.

Council Members reviewed a video.

There was a brief discussion about profitability of being a control state as compared to other states and introducing the concept to Irish...only need to sell to one entity, making NH easy to partner with.

It was noted that Millennials and GenX don't buy in bulk, they buying less, but are spending more on high quality, unique alcohol.

Council Members were invited to two upcoming events, one in Boston and one at the Manchester Country Club (March 4 and 6 respectively).

Darragh Madden advised that Irish Minister Peter Burke is coming to Boston and New Hampshire. Chair Carson asked that the Council be notified of details once confirmed.

Next meeting of the Council will be on March 21st at 1:30 p.m. at BEA offices in Concord.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Minutes approved 3/21/2025

