

Seaport Neighborhood Association

June 25, 2025

City of Boston
Office of Licensing & Community Affairs
Kathleen Joyce, Executive Director

Re: Ballers Seaport

Dear Members of the Entertainment Licensing Board,
We respectfully submit additional comments on the noise study commissioned by the applicant along with our recommendations for the Board. After reviewing the report and informally consulting with a qualified noise expert, it is clear that the study is inadequate to support any conclusions regarding the quiet enjoyment of the many residents who may be affected. Please see our analysis below:

No Evening or Morning Measurements

All sound measurements were conducted between 10:30 AM and 12:00 PM, yet the facility intends to operate from 7am until 10pm most days. Evening and morning hours typically have much lower background noise levels, making recreational sounds more noticeable and disruptive. A study that omits this timeframe does not meaningfully assess the potential for real-world impacts.

Failure to Consider Outdoor Living Spaces

The report focuses solely on indoor noise levels with closed windows, referencing window sound ratings. However, it fails to address exposure in outdoor residential spaces like balconies, patios, and rooftop terraces, spaces that are frequently used and acoustically exposed. Residents also may wish to open their windows. The omission of these areas is a significant blind spot in evaluating how residents will actually experience noise from this facility.

No Modeling of Simultaneous Court Use

The analysis considers only a single court, yet the Ballers facility includes multiple adjacent courts. It fails to model the combined noise from simultaneous games—a predictable scenario that would significantly raise sound levels. Without this, the study does not reflect realistic operating conditions.

Underestimated Peak Noise Levels

The study uses LASmax (slow response) to measure the loudest paddle strikes, a method that smooths out brief, high-impact sounds. As noted in research presented at Noise-Con 2023, LAFmax (fast response) is the appropriate standard for impulsive recreational noise. By using the slower metric, the report understates the true acoustic impact of pickleball play.



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Incomplete Frequency and Broadband Analysis

The report highlights activity at 1000 Hz but does not specify the resolution of analysis (e.g., octave or 1/3-octave bands), and fails to account for higher-frequency energy, which is common in pickleball impacts and more intrusive to the human ear. It also omits broadband sound levels, which are essential for understanding cumulative environmental exposure.

Conclusion

The Ballers study omits the most important data: evening and morning measurements, outdoor exposure, cumulative impact, and urban sound behavior. The sound levels are understated, the modeling is oversimplified, and the analysis falls far short of professional expectations for a project located so close to residential buildings.

A more appropriate and independent study should be conducted, one not driven by the developer's financial interests, but instead centered on the well-being of residents and the long-term planning goals of the city. This issue deserves careful analysis by parties committed to balancing quality of life with the city's interest in supporting thriving, successful businesses. It is at this point that we should decide if, when, and where an outdoor pickleball facility should be located in the Seaport. Should this Board move forward with this project, it has the potential to affect residents for up to 15 hours per day, seven days per week.

Recommendations

We urge the Board to deny an annual entertainment license for Ballers Seaport until an independent, comprehensive noise study is conducted and the feasibility can be assessed. In the alternative to a denial, we seek that this Board award successive, one-day entertainment licenses to the applicant for a time period of six months that will expire upon a volume of complaints from residents, and run concurrently with an independent noise study.

Sincerely,

The Seaport Neighborhood Association Board of Directors

