

Judge delivers sobering ruling to raucous Frankford bar

4/21/2004

Attorneys for the city's Public Nuisance Task Force wanted to make sure that Frankford's Pat McGinniss Tavern wouldn't serve another drink to any patron until at least next March. Last week, a Common Pleas Court judge granted that wish. Judge Annette Rizzo ordered the bar, at 5007 Frankford Ave., closed for a year after prosecutors documented 70 police emergency calls and 22 drug arrests there last year.

The permanent "611 action" replaces a temporary injunction issued by Rizzo last month pending a full hearing. Under the order, the bar must hand over its liquor license for "safe keeping" for the remainder of the one-year term of the penalty.

In the meantime, under the state's nuisance bar forfeiture law, the district attorney's office will try to take over the deed to the property — meaning the bar would be closed down for good.

In arguing for the one-year closure, Assistant District Attorney Scott Sigman said, "The community needs to heal. There's been terrible wounds to the community."

Leaders of several community groups have joined officials from nearby Frankford Hospital and police in condemning the bar as a center of illegal activity in the neighborhood, as evidenced by the history of police activity there.

The bar is one of several throughout the city that the Public Nuisance Task Force has in recent weeks been trying to force to close.

If a court awards the deed to the district attorney's office, the tavern property will be sold, with the proceeds of the sale benefiting future anti-drug efforts by law enforcement personnel ••