

2026 IL App (1st) 250334-U

No. 1-25-0334

First Division
September 21, 2026

NOTICE: This order was filed under Supreme Court Rule 23 and is not precedent except in the limited circumstances allowed under Rule 23(e)(1).

IN THE
APPELLATE COURT OF ILLINOIS
FIRST DISTRICT

RAVEN’S PLACE, LLC, d/b/a Raven’s	)	Appeal from the
Place, and The Vault Entertainment Group,	)	Circuit Court of
	)	Cook County.
Plaintiff-Appellant,	)	
	)	
v.	)	No. 23 CH 006648
	)	
THE CITY OF BLUE ISLAND, ILLINOIS;	)	
BLUE ISLAND LIQUOR CONTROL	)	Honorable
COMMISSION; FERDINANDO BILOTTO,	)	Thaddeus L. Wilson,
Local Liquor License Commissioner, City of	)	Judge, Presiding.
Blue Island; ILLINOIS LIQUOR CONTROL	)	
COMMISSION; CYNTHIA BERG,	)	
Chairman; MELODY SPAN COOPER,	)	
Commissioner; JULIETA LAMALFA,	)	
Commissioner; THOMAS GIBBONS,	)	
Commissioner; STEVE POWELL,	)	
Commissioner; BRIAN SULLIVAN,	)	
Commissioner; PATRICIA PULIDO	)	
SANCHEZ, Commissioner;	)	
	)	
Defendants-Appellees.	)	
	)	

JUSTICE COBBS delivered the judgment of the court.
Justices Smith and Howse concurred in the judgment.

ORDER

¶ 1 *Held:* The circuit court properly denied plaintiff's motion for leave to amend its complaint for administrative review. The circuit court's judgment affirming the final administrative decision of the Illinois Liquor Control Commission is affirmed where plaintiff's request for relief is moot.

¶ 2 This administrative review action stems from the January 10, 2023, revocation of the liquor licenses for plaintiff-appellant Raven's Place, LLC, doing business as Raven's Place and The Vault Entertainment Group, by defendants-appellees the City of Blue Island (the City), Blue Island Liquor Control Commission, and Ferdinando Bilotto, Local Liquor License Commissioner for Blue Island (Local Commissioner). Plaintiff appealed the revocation order of the Local Commissioner to defendants-appellees Illinois Liquor Control Commission and its respective commissioners (ILCC). On April 19, 2023, the ILCC upheld the Local Commissioner's January 2023 order, and on January 23, 2025, the circuit court affirmed the ILCC's decision. Plaintiff now appeals from the circuit court's denial of its motion for leave to amend its complaint for administrative review and the circuit court's affirmance of the ILCC's final administrative decision as related to the Local Commissioner's January 10, 2023, revocation order. On appeal, plaintiff argues that: (1) the Local Commissioner erred in relying on a May 2021 agreement between plaintiff and Blue Island where Blue Island lacked authority to enter into the agreement; (2) the Local Commissioner erred in relying on the agreement as it was unenforceable; (3) the ILCC erred in finding that plaintiff's businesses were a nuisance; (4) the Local Commissioner violated plaintiff's fundamental due process rights by basing its decision on inadmissible hearsay from non-testifying declarants; (5) plaintiff did not receive a fair and impartial administrative hearing; and

(6) the circuit court erred in denying plaintiff's motion for leave to amend its complaint for administrative review. For the reasons that follow, we affirm.

¶ 3

I. BACKGROUND

¶ 4 Plaintiff is the licensee for Raven's Place and The Vault. Raven's Place is a liquor establishment located at 13031 Western Avenue, Blue Island, Cook County, Illinois. The Vault is an amusement center and sports bar featuring arcade games and a venue space located at 13057 Western Avenue, Blue Island, Cook County, Illinois. Plaintiff operated these two businesses for 13 years. Blue Island is a municipal entity located in Cook County, Illinois, with a population of less than 22,000 individuals, rendering it a non-home rule municipality. See Ill. Const. 1970, art. VI, §§ 6, 7; see also *Village of Sugar Grove v. Rich*, 347 Ill. App. 3d 689, 694 (2004).

¶ 5 On May 2, 2021, approximately 23 gunshots were fired toward The Vault's parking lot, and The Vault's security personnel returned fire. Subsequently, on May 7, 2021, the City of Blue Island Mayor Bilotto, who is also the Local Liquor Control Commissioner, imposed an emergency seven-day closure order for The Vault.

¶ 6 Later that month, on May 18, 2021, the City entered into an agreement with plaintiff (May 2021 agreement), wherein plaintiff agreed to abide by certain conditions and restrictions "to ensure that operation of [its] establishments shall not be harmful to the safety, morals and welfare of the community." Under the agreement, plaintiff was required to utilize identification scanners, to restrict the age of its patrons to 25 years or older at The Vault and 30 years or older at Raven's Place, to close Raven's Place at 2 a.m. and The Vault at 2:30 a.m. and stop serving alcohol half an hour before closing, to pay a \$7,500 fine, and to schedule an onsite meeting with the City's staff. Plaintiff also submitted a security plan in accordance with the May 2021 agreement.

¶ 7 On September 17, 2022, a shooting occurred between intoxicated patrons outside of Raven's Place. Police recovered over 60 bullet casings, and two people suffered gunshot wounds. That day, the Local Commissioner issued an emergency closure order for both businesses, Raven's Place and The Vault.

¶ 8 On October 12, 2022, the Local Commissioner held an evidentiary hearing related to the September 2022 incident, and, on October 17, 2022, issued an order revoking plaintiff's liquor licenses. On October 20, 2022, plaintiff filed a petition to appeal the October 17, 2022, order with the ILCC. Both businesses were permitted to reopen during the pendency of the appeal.

¶ 9 Just after midnight on January 1, 2023, another shooting occurred in the vicinity of the businesses. Blue Island law enforcement arrested Kenya Walton, who admitted that she fired her gun into the air multiple times in a municipal parking lot near The Vault and Raven's Place. She was charged with reckless discharge of a firearm. In an interview with police, Walton admitted that she and her friends, one of whom was 21 years old, were at The Vault earlier that night. Later that day, the Local Commissioner issued an emergency seven-day closure order for both businesses.

¶ 10 Two days after the shooting, on January 3, 2023, the City served plaintiff with a citation and notice of a hearing on January 6, 2023. Plaintiff filed an answer to the citation prior to the hearing. At the evidentiary hearing, the City presented the testimony of Detective Nancy Bailey, Blue Island police chief Geoffrey Farr, and Mark Patoska, deputy administrator for the City. Plaintiff presented the testimony of Raymond Thomas, general manager of Raven's Place and The Vault.

¶ 11 On January 10, 2023, the Local Commissioner issued his "Findings, Decision, and Order." Therein, the Commissioner set forth the above history and additionally stated that, in 2020,

plaintiff's business licensure was revoked "for failure to follow COVID guidelines and multiple incidents of unlawful parking, double parking, patrons acting disorderly in City streets, patrons loitering in parking lots, patrons littering, and the community not appreciating the overall volume of people brought into the City by [plaintiff's] large events." The Local Commissioner also related that, in October 2021, plaintiff was ordered "to cease running an unlicensed and illegal hookah business out of its premises" and, in July 2022, plaintiff "paid a fine and plead no contest to a citation for public nuisance, when one of the security guards for the business was found to be charging patrons a fee to park in free City parking lots."

¶ 12 The Local Commissioner found that, on January 1, 2023, plaintiff's liquor licenses had expired. Plaintiff had submitted its liquor license renewal applications on December 28, 2022, but they contained "misstatements" relating to plaintiff's revocation history and its businesses' closing times. These applications also "contained insufficient evidence to verify that [T]he Vault's liquor license should be renewed as a restaurant liquor license, which requires 60% of sales to be related to food and 40% of sales to be related to liquor" and the documentation submitted did not satisfy this requirement. Plaintiff was notified via e-mail of these deficiencies on December 30, 2022, but the requisite documentation was not provided until after January 1, 2023.

¶ 13 The Local Commissioner then set forth the facts relating to the January 1, 2023, incident. The Local Commissioner found that Walton fired 12 rounds "recklessly into the air" and, prior to doing so, she and her friends had been at The Vault. The Local Commissioner concluded that plaintiff had been operating as a public nuisance and it breached the May 2021 agreement, causing disorderly conduct and loitering. Further, plaintiff failed to renew its liquor licenses in a timely manner, failed to provide the City with specific documentation related to the renewal applications, and included misstatements in the applications. Plaintiff's liquor licenses were therefore revoked.

¶ 14 Also on January 10, 2023, Mayor Bilotto issued a separate order, finding that plaintiff constituted a public nuisance and revoking its business licenses. That order adopted and incorporated the factual findings and conclusions of law contained in the liquor license revocation order. Separate from this action, plaintiff filed a complaint for administrative review of the business license revocation order in the circuit court. The circuit court affirmed, and this court also affirmed (*Raven’s Place v. City of Blue Island*, No. 1-23-1186 (Mar. 24, 2025)). Specifically, this court rejected plaintiff’s arguments that the May 2021 agreement was invalid and that the City should not have considered inadmissible hearsay in coming to its decision. On January 28, 2026, the Illinois Supreme Court denied plaintiff’s petition for leave to appeal. *Raven’s Place v. City of Blue Island*, No. 131737 (Jan. 28, 2026).

¶ 15 Turning back to the liquor license action, in January 2023, plaintiff filed a motion for stay of execution of the January 10, 2023, revocation/non-renewal order with the ILCC. On January 30, 2023, the ILCC answered that it “does not have the authority to enforce the automatic stay provisions” of the Liquor Control Act and, therefore, would “not respond with a ruling” on plaintiff’s motion to stay. In a footnote, the ILCC advised that it had “opened two cases” based on plaintiff’s associated liquor license numbers for each business “under 23 APP 02 (State License No. 1A-1141850) and 23 AP 03 (State License No. 1A-0102142).”

¶ 16 Sometime between January and March, plaintiff filed a petition to appeal the January 10, 2023, order with the ILCC. On March 21, 2023, the ILCC, represented by Commissioner LaMalfa and Commissioner Sullivan, conducted an “on the record” hearing.

¶ 17 On April 19, 2023, the ILCC issued its decision, affirming the Local Commissioner’s January 10, 2023, revocation of plaintiff’s liquor licenses. Relevant to our disposition, we note that the caption of the ILCC’s decision indicates that it is related to case numbers 23 APP 02 and 23

APP 03 and state license numbers 1A-0102142 and 1A-1141850. The decision explicitly stated that “[t]he focus of the [ILCC’s] review and decisions is on the new charges and conclusions originating in December 2022/January 2023 in conjunction with a consideration of the significant negative license history of [plaintiff].” Additionally, in a footnote, the ILCC stated that it took “notice of the record filed under 22 APP 17 and 22 APP 18 and concurrently considered with this matter.” On the same day, the ILCC also issued a decision relating to 22 APP 17 and 22 APP 18, which focused on the September 17, 2022 incident and affirmed the Local Commissioner’s October 17, 2022 revocation order. Copies of both orders were mailed to the parties on May 18, 2023.

¶ 18 On June 6, 2023, plaintiff filed two separate petitions for rehearing relating to each set of appeals, which were both denied by the ILCC on June 21, 2023, and copies of the denials were served on June 23, 2023.

¶ 19 On July 19, 2023, plaintiff filed a complaint in the circuit court for administrative review of the ILCC’s decision affirming the City’s January 2023 order revoking plaintiff’s liquor licenses. Plaintiff did not mention the October 2022 order or the ILCC’s separately issued decision affirming that order. Those decisions were not attached to the complaint as exhibits either. On August 23, 2023, the ILCC filed its answer to the complaint, which included the administrative record for case numbers 23 APP 02 and 23 APP 03; it did not contain any documents related to the Local Commissioner’s October 2022 revocation order and plaintiff’s appeals therefrom. On October 23, 2023, plaintiff filed its brief in support of administrative review, which also only addressed the January 2023 order and corresponding ILCC decision.

¶ 20 On November 14, 2023, plaintiff filed a motion for leave to file a first amended complaint, seeking “to clarify, to the extent necessary, that it seeks review and reversal of the October 17,

202[2] order entered by the Blue Island Commission, in addition to the January 10, 2023 order entered by the Blue Island Commission, and the May 18, 2023 orders **** entered by the [ILCC].” Plaintiff also attached a copy of the October 17, 2022, order as an exhibit to its motion. On December 22, 2023, defendants filed a joint response to the motion, arguing that the circuit court lacked jurisdiction to review the ILCC’s separate decision affirming the October 2022 order. On January 19, 2024, plaintiff filed its reply.

¶ 21 On May 9, 2024, the circuit court, in a written order, denied plaintiff’s motion for leave to amend, concluding that it is improper for plaintiff to attempt to have both decisions addressed in a single complaint for administrative review and any judicial review of the October 2022 revocation is untimely under the Administrative Review Law.

¶ 22 Following briefing on plaintiff’s complaint, on January 23, 2025, the circuit court entered a written order, concluding that there was no justiciable issue before the court and plaintiff’s request for relief was moot as a matter of law. The court also addressed plaintiff’s other arguments “for the sake of completeness” and found that both decisions would have been upheld had they been timely appealed. Thus, the circuit court denied plaintiff’s complaint for administrative review and affirmed the ILCC’s decision affirming the Local Commissioner’s January 2023 revocation order.

¶ 23 This appeal followed.

¶ 24 II. ANALYSIS

¶ 25 On appeal, plaintiff argues that: (1) the ILCC erred in relying on a May 2021 agreement between plaintiff and the City where the City lacked authority to enter into the agreement; (2) the ILCC erred in relying on the agreement as it was unenforceable; (3) the ILCC erred in finding that plaintiff’s businesses were a nuisance; (4) plaintiff’s fundamental due process rights were violated

where the Local Commissioner's order was based on inadmissible hearsay from non-testifying declarants; (5) plaintiff did not receive a fair and impartial administrative hearing; and (6) the circuit court erred in denying plaintiff's motion for leave to amend its complaint for administrative review.

¶ 26 In response, defendants argue that the circuit court properly denied plaintiff's motion for leave to amend the complaint, and, because plaintiff failed to timely appeal the ILCC's final administrative decision affirming the October 2022 revocation order, its liquor licenses are revoked regardless of the outcome of this appeal. Defendants thus contend that plaintiff's appeal is moot. Should this court reach the underlying merits of the appeal, defendants contend that the ILCC's determination that the Local Commissioner did not abuse his discretion in revoking plaintiff's liquor licenses was not clearly erroneous.¹

¶ 27 A. Motion to Amend Complaint

¶ 28 Because it bears on the other issues raised in this appeal, we first address plaintiff's challenge to the circuit court's denial of its motion for leave to amend its complaint for administrative review.

¶ 29 Generally, leave to amend pleadings prior to a final judgment should be liberally allowed (*Reuter v. MasterCard Intern., Inc.*, 397 Ill. App. 3d 915, 929 (2010)), but the right to amend "is not absolute and unlimited" (*Freedberg v. Ohio National Ins. Co.*, 2012 IL App (1st) 110938, ¶ 41). The decision of whether to grant or deny an amendment is subject to the following factors: (1) whether the proposed amendment would cure a defect in the pleadings; (2) whether the proposed amendment would prejudice or surprise other parties; (3) whether the proposed

¹Defendants-appellees the City of Blue Island and Ferdinando Bilotto adopted the response brief filed by defendants-appellees the ILCC and its individually named commissioners.

amendment is timely; and (4) whether there were previous opportunities to amend the pleading. *Loyola Academy v. S & S Roof Maintenance, Inc.*, 146 Ill. 2d 263, 273 (1992). “When ruling on a motion to amend a complaint, the trial court enjoys broad discretion.” *Maschek v. City of Chicago*, 2015 IL App (1st) 150520, ¶ 80. As such, this court typically reviews the denial of a motion for leave to file an amended complaint for abuse of discretion, which will be found only where no reasonable person would take the view adopted by the trial court. *Keefe-Shea Joint Venture v. City of Evanston*, 364 Ill. App. 3d 48, 61 (2005). However, where, as here, “the purported defects *** relate to the circuit court’s jurisdiction[,]” we are required “to interpret the relevant statutory framework, all matters of law that are subject to *de novo* review.” *City of Chicago v. City of Kankakee*, 2019 IL 122878, ¶ 20.

¶ 30 “Where a statute provides that the administrative decisions of an agency are subject to the Administrative Review Law, that statute is the exclusive method for the review of an administrative agency’s final decision.” *Karfs v. City of Belleville*, 329 Ill. App. 3d 1198, 1205 (2002). Here, the Liquor Control Act grants the circuit court jurisdiction to review final administrative decisions of the ILCC “pursuant to the provisions of the Administrative Review Law” (735 ILCS 5/3-101 *et seq.* (West 2024)). 235 ILCS 5/7-11 (West 2024). The Administrative Review Law provides that a party to a proceeding before an administrative agency “shall be barred from obtaining judicial review” of a final administrative decision “[u]nless review is sought *** within the time and in the manner” provided in the statute. 735 ILCS 5/3-102 (West 2024). Section 3-103 sets forth those parameters: “Every action to review a final administrative decision shall be commenced by the filing of a complaint and issuance of summons within 35 days after the date that a copy of the decision sought to be reviewed was served upon the party affected by the decision[.]” 735 ILCS 5/3-103 (West 2024); see *Nudell v. Forest Preserve District*, 207 Ill. 2d

409, 414, 424 (2006) (holding that the 35-day time period begins on the date the agency decision is mailed). Because the circuit court exercises its special statutory jurisdiction pursuant to the Administrative Review Law, “[i]f the statutorily prescribed procedures are not strictly followed, ‘no jurisdiction is conferred on the circuit court.’ ” *Rodriguez v. Sheriff’s Merit Commission of Kane County*, 218 Ill. 2d 342, 350 (2006) (quoting *Fredman Brothers Furniture Co. v. Department of Revenue*, 109 Ill. 2d 202, 210 (1985)). Significantly, courts “may not resort to other law, either statutory or common law, that either expands or limits the provisions of the [Administrative] Review Law to obtain a different result.” *McGaw Medical Center of Northwestern University v. Department of Employment Security*, 369 Ill. App. 3d 37, 43 (2006).

¶ 31 In the instant case, the ILCC issued two separate, written decisions affirming the Local Commissioner’s October 2022 and January 2023 liquor license revocation orders. On June 6, 2023, plaintiff filed petitions for rehearing as to both ILCC orders, and the ILCC denied those petitions on June 21, 2023. The ILCC served plaintiff with copies of the final orders denying the petitions for rehearing on June 23, 2023. Thus, plaintiff had until July 28, 2023 to seek administrative review of both decisions.

¶ 32 On July 18, 2023, plaintiff filed its complaint for administrative review. The complaint did not reference the Local Commissioner’s October 2022 order or the ILCC’s separate decision affirming that order. The complaint also did not allege any factual allegations stemming from any other incidents prior to December 2022. The exhibits attached to the complaint did not include the Local Commissioner’s October 2022 order or the ILCC’s decision affirming the October 2022 order, or any other documents specifically relating to the October 2022 order. After the ILCC filed the administrative record in the circuit court, which did not include any of the previously mentioned documents either, plaintiff sought to amend its complaint to “clarify” that it was seeking

review and reversal of both ILCC decisions. The circuit court denied plaintiff leave to amend because it was improper to seek administrative review of both decisions in the same complaint for administrative review and the time period for appealing the decision relating to the October 2022 order had elapsed.

¶ 33 We first agree with the circuit court that plaintiff's attempt to seek review of the ILCC's decision affirming the October 2022 revocation of the licenses was untimely. The Administrative Review Law is clear that review must be sought only in the manner provided by the statute, and the statute required that judicial review be sought within 35 days after the date the decision was served upon the parties. See *Cinkus v. Village of Stickney Municipal Officers Electoral Board*, 228 Ill. 2d 200, 216-17 (2008) (where the plain and ordinary meaning of a statute's language is clear, the legislature's intent is unambiguous, and we need not use other tools of construction). The ILCC's decision denying the petition for rehearing as related to the October 2022 set of appeals specifically stated that the date of service was June 23, 2023. There can be no dispute then that plaintiff was required to seek review of that set of appeals (22 APP 17 and 22 APP 18) by July 28, 2023. Thus, plaintiff's November 14, 2023, attempt to amend its complaint to add review of the decision related to the Local Commissioner's October 2022 order was not timely and therefore judicial review could not be had of that decision in accordance with the Administrative Review Law.

¶ 34 We next address whether plaintiff was permitted to seek administrative review of both ILCC decisions within the same complaint. Plaintiff relies upon *Hagen v. Stone*, 277 Ill. App. 3d 388 (1995), for support of its argument that circuit courts have jurisdiction "to hear multiple decisions brought in a single petition for judicial review." However, we find that case inapposite. There, the petitioner objected to the four respondents having their names printed on the ballot as

candidates for the board of education for Niles Township Highschool. *Id.* at 389. The Electoral Board found that the petitioner’s objections to the four nominating petitions did not establish *prima facie* cases and declared the nominating petitions valid. *Id.* at 390. On appeal, this court was tasked with determining whether the circuit court had jurisdiction to hear a single petition for judicial review of the Electoral Board’s four separate decisions under the Election Code (10 ILCS 5/1 *et seq.* (West 1994)). *Id.* at 391. The respondents argued that the legislature’s intent was to restrict judicial review to only one candidate or one decision per proceeding, and petitioner’s filing of a single complaint relating to four separate objections was statutorily impermissible. *Id.* This court rejected that argument and held that the circuit court had jurisdiction to a hear a single petition for review pursuant to the Election Code. *Id.* at 392. The court explained that the petitioner’s complaint “include[d] five separate counts[,]” which were viewed as separate and distinct causes of actions based upon similar factual allegations and, if filed separately, they would likely be later consolidated for judicial economy and trial convenience. *Id.*

¶ 35 This case is distinguishable from *Hagen* for two reasons. First, the court there was interpreting a different statute, a particular provision within the Election Code, whereas, here, we construe the Administrative Review Law, which contains different language and is subject to a strict level of compliance. See *Ultsch v. Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund*, 226 Ill. 2d 169, 178 (2007) (procedures prescribed by the Administrative Review Law require strict compliance). Second, the two decisions at issue here, *i.e.*, the ILCC’s individual affirmances of the Local Commissioner’s October 2022 and January 2023 orders, were not based upon the same factual allegations. The ILCC explicitly stated in the January 2023 affirmance decision that “[t]he focus of the [ILCC’s] review and decisions is on the new charges and conclusions originating in December 2022/January 2023 in conjunction with a consideration of the significant negative

license history of [plaintiff].” Those new charges consisted of the incident occurring on January 1, 2023 and plaintiff’s failures with regard to renewing its liquor licenses at the end of 2022. Neither of those were considered in the October 2022 affirmance decision, as they had not yet occurred. Rather, the October 2022 affirmance decision focused on the September 17, 2022 incident and plaintiff’s “prior license violation history leading up to the September 17 incident.” It is clear then that the allegations underlying the two separate ILCC decisions, though somewhat overlapping, were not similar enough to permit review in the same complaint.

¶ 36 This court in *Finko v. City of Chicago Department of Administrative Hearings*, 2016 IL App (1st) 152888, relied upon similar reasoning in distinguishing *Hagen*, and we therefore find *Finko* instructive here. In *Finko*, the petitioner contested two parking tickets received at the same location but on different days in July 2014. *Id.* ¶¶ 1, 5. The administrative law judge issued findings on each ticket finding that the information submitted supported the tickets, and the Department of Administrative Hearings affirmed those findings. *Id.* ¶ 5. The petitioner filed a complaint for administrative review which listed both ticket numbers and attached copies of the Department’s separate orders as exhibits. *Id.* ¶ 6. “[F]or reasons unknown,” the court entered an order which listed and addressed only one of the tickets, and the City subsequently filed the administrative record related to only that ticket. *Id.* ¶¶ 6-7. The petitioner filed a motion to consolidate and compel the City to file the record related to the other ticket, which the circuit court denied, finding that the facts of each ticket were not the same because they were issued on different days. *Id.* ¶¶ 8, 10. On appeal, this court concluded that the Administrative Review Law “requires a party to file a complaint for each final administrative decision the party wants to appeal” and found that “since no complaint was filed for [the other ticket] within the 35 day time period, the trial court was

without jurisdiction” to review that claim, “on its own or pursuant to a motion to consolidate.” *Id.* ¶ 18.

¶ 37 We come to the same conclusion here. The Local Commissioner issued two separate and distinct orders in October 2022 and January 2023, based on different factual allegations. The ILCC assigned the appeals from those orders different case numbers and subsequently issued two separate decisions on the same day affirming each of the Local Commissioner’s orders. Although the ILCC stated that it took “notice of the record filed under 22 APP 17 and 22 APP 18 and concurrently considered with this matter[,]” it nonetheless entered separate final decisions on each matter and did not expressly incorporate its October 2022 affirmance decision into the January 2023 decision. Thus, plaintiff, in accordance with the Administrative Review Law, was required to file a complaint for administrative review for each final administrative decision.

¶ 38 For this same reason, we also reject plaintiff’s argument that its complaint implicitly challenged the October 2022 order. Even if we found that plaintiff had implicitly challenged both decisions in the same complaint, it was not proper to do so under the Administrative Review Law.

¶ 39 In conclusion, the circuit court lacked jurisdiction to review the October 2022 decision, where it cannot be considered in the same administrative review action as the January 2023 decision and the 35-day time period to appeal had lapsed. We thus affirm the circuit court’s denial of plaintiff’s motion for leave to amend.

¶ 40 B. Mootness

¶ 41 Next, we must address defendants’ argument that, if we uphold the circuit court’s denial of the motion to amend the complaint, then we should also uphold the circuit court’s conclusion that this case is moot. Defendants contend that plaintiff’s success in this action would not change the ultimate outcome because it failed to seek timely review of the October 2022 order and its liquor

licenses will remain revoked pursuant to that decision. Further, defendants assert that plaintiff is ineligible for future liquor licenses because the revocation was “for cause” under section 4-4(1) of the Liquor Control Act.

¶ 42 Plaintiff failed to address mootness in its opening brief and declined to file a reply brief. Thus, plaintiff has forfeited any challenges to the application of the mootness doctrine or any argument that an exception is applicable here. See Ill. S. Ct. R. 341(h)(7) (eff. Oct. 1, 2020) (points not argued are forfeited); *Vancura v. Katris*, 238 Ill. 2d 352, 369 (2010). 2025 IL App (1st) 240045; 221 Ill. 2d 338. For the following reasons, we find that the mootness doctrine is applicable here.

¶ 43 “An appeal is moot when it involves no actual controversy or the reviewing court cannot grant the complaining party effectual relief.” *Steinbrecher v. Steinbrecher*, 197 Ill. 2d 514, 522-23 (2001). Generally, reviewing courts will “not consider moot or abstract questions because our jurisdiction is restricted to cases which present an actual controversy.” *Id.* at 523. “When it becomes apparent that an opinion cannot affect the results as to the parties or the controversy before it, the court should not resolve the question merely for the sake of setting a precedent or to govern potential future cases.” *Edwardsville School Service Personnel Association, IEA-NEA v. Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board*, 235 Ill. App. 3d 954, 959 (1992).

¶ 44 Plaintiff’s appeal, in effect, seeks a reversal of the Local Commissioner’s revocation of the liquor licenses for plaintiff’s two businesses, Raven’s Place and The Vault. The Local Commissioner revoked both of plaintiff’s liquor licenses on October 17, 2022, and January 10, 2023, in separate orders. The ILCC then affirmed each of those orders in separate decisions entered on the same day and subsequently denied plaintiff’s petition for rehearing as to each decision. As we have determined above, plaintiff has failed to timely seek judicial review of the ILCC’s decision as to the October 2022 revocation, and it is now final and can no longer be challenged.

Thus, even were we to reverse the January 2023 revocation, the October 2022 revocation would still stand. Plaintiff's success on the merits of this appeal would not change the fact that its liquor licenses have been revoked.

¶ 45 Moreover, we point out that plaintiff is now ineligible for future liquor licenses under the Liquor Control Act. Section 4-4 provides that the local commissioner has the power to “revoke *for cause* all local licenses issued to persons for premises within his jurisdiction[.]” (Emphasis added.) 235 ILCS 5/4-4 (West 2024). Section 6-2 provides a list of those persons prohibited from receiving a liquor license, which includes “[a] person whose license issued under this Act has been revoked for cause.” 235 ILCS 5/6-2(7) (West 2024). The revocation was clearly “for cause” as the Local Commissioner set forth in the revocation orders a litany of incidents and violations which led to its decision to revoke plaintiff's liquor licenses. In fact, the Local Commissioner stated that it found “sufficient and just cause” existed to revoke the liquor licenses. Therefore, plaintiff cannot be granted effectual relief through this appeal, and therefore, it is moot.

¶ 46 Although we may conclude our analysis here, in the interest of completeness, we will also assess the applicability of any exception to the mootness doctrine. In Illinois, we generally recognize three exceptions to the doctrine: the public interest exception, the capable of repetition yet evading review exception, and the collateral consequences exception. *In re Marcus S.*, 2022 IL App (3d) 160710, ¶ 44 (citing *In re Alfred H.*, 233 Ill. 2d 345, 355-62 (2009)).

¶ 47 First, the public interest exception applies “when the magnitude or immediacy of the interests involved warrants action by the court.” *Commonwealth Edison Co. v. Illinois Commerce Commission*, 2016 IL 118129, ¶ 12. “The public interest exception allows a court to consider an otherwise moot case when (1) the question presented is of a public nature; (2) there is a need for an authoritative determination for the future guidance of public officers; and (3) there is a

likelihood of future recurrence of the question.” *Alfred H.H.*, 233 Ill. 2d 345, 355 (2009). Each criterion must be clearly established. *In re Marriage of Peters-Farrell*, 216 Ill. 2d 287, 292 (2005).

¶ 48 As to the first criterion, “case-specific inquiries, such as sufficiency of the evidence, do not present the kinds of broad public issues required for review under the public interest exception.” *In re Rita P.*, 2014 IL 115798, ¶ 36. Here, the issue is whether the Local Commissioner’s revocation of plaintiff’s liquor licenses was proper and whether the revocation was supported by sufficient evidence. Although it does involve a public entity and plaintiff does raise due process concerns, this case is specific to plaintiff’s businesses, incidents that occurred at or near them, and the enforceability of a unique agreement between plaintiff and the City. See *Bright v. Yenchko*, 2026 IL 132015, ¶ 28 (where “the application of a law to a particular party or set of facts” is at issue, this exception is generally not triggered). Resolution of this appeal would simply not have a significant effect on the public. Because the questions involved in this appeal are not of a “public nature,” the public interest exception is not applicable.

¶ 49 The capable of repetition but evading review exception has two elements: (1) “the duration of the challenged action must be too short to be fully litigated before its end and (2) a reasonable expectation the same complainant will again be subject to the same action.” *In re Julie M.*, 2021 IL 125768, ¶ 22. Neither of these elements are satisfied in this case. The first element is not satisfied because plaintiff could have obtained meaningful review of the case by timely filing a separate complaint for the other ILCC decision. See *GlidePath Development, LLC v. Illinois Commerce Commission*, 2019 IL App (1st) 180893, ¶ 30 (exception not applicable where the respondent only need to obtain a stay to receive meaningful review of the case). The second element is also not satisfied because this case turns on the specific facts and unique circumstances resulting in the revocation of the liquor licenses and this exception “does not apply where the

complaining party challenges the specific factual findings.” *Id.* ¶ 35. Additionally, as defendants point out, the revocation of the liquor licenses was “for cause” and under the Liquor Control Act, this means that plaintiff is statutorily ineligible to apply for liquor licenses in the future. As such, plaintiff simply will not be subject to the same action again. This exception is thus not applicable here either.

¶ 50 Finally, we determine whether the collateral consequences exception applies. “Under this exception, where collateral consequences survive the expiration or cessation of a court order that are likely to be redressed by a favorable judicial determination, appellate review is permissible.” *Rita P.*, 2014 IL 115798, ¶ 31. Stated another way, “a case is not moot if there remains a secondary or collateral injury despite the resolution of a party’s primary claim.” We are unaware of any collateral injuries that have been triggered by the underlying actions, and we cannot foresee any future injuries befalling plaintiff where plaintiff’s liquor licenses have been permanently revoked and its business licenses have also been revoked.

¶ 51 Thus, as none of the exceptions are applicable here, we conclude that the circuit court correctly determined that plaintiff’s complaint for administrative review was moot, and we affirm the circuit court’s judgment affirming the ILCC’s decision as to the Local Commissioner’s January 2023 decision to revoke plaintiff’s liquor licenses.²

¶ 52 III. CONCLUSION

¶ 53 For the reasons stated, we affirm the judgment of the circuit court.

¶ 54 Circuit court judgment affirmed.

²Typically, mootness results in dismissal of the appeal. See *Commonwealth Edison Co.*, 2016 IL 118129, ¶ 21 (where no exception applies, an appeal must be dismissed as moot). Here, as our disposition turned, in the first instance, on the propriety of the trial court’s denial of plaintiff’s motion to amend the complaint, dismissal would not be appropriate in this instance.

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¶ 55 Illinois Liquor Control Commission decision affirmed.