

## Proper Grounds for Alcohol Beverage Establishment Disciplinary Action

The following are just some of the reasons that the Common Council can refuse to renew, can suspend, or can revoke an alcohol beverage license. Note that some are subjective and may only be determined after a proper hearing process.

### Grounds for Non-Renewal

1. Pending charges against or the conviction of any felony, misdemeanor, municipal offense or other offense, the circumstances of which substantially relate to the circumstances of the operation of an alcohol beverage establishment on behalf of the licensee, employees, or patrons.
2. Failure of the licensee to operate the premise in accordance with the floor plan and plan of operation submitted to the City as part of his or her license application.

### Grounds for Suspension or Revocation

1. Violation of any state law or city ordinance prohibiting the sale of alcohol to underage persons, or to any person intoxicated or bordering on the state of intoxication.
2. Operation of the tavern in such a manner that it constitutes a nuisance or permitting conduct that has a substantial adverse effect on the health, safety or convenience and prosperity of the immediate neighborhood.
3. Failure of the licensee to operate the premise in accordance with the floor plan and plan of operation submitted to the City as part of his or her license application.

*Please note that an establishment being in poor physical condition is not a valid reason for nonrenewal, suspension or revocation of an alcohol beverage license. Property maintenance complaints can be directed to the **Dept. of Neighborhood Services** at (414) 286-2268.*

## Contact Information

### License Division

Room 105, City Hall  
200 E. Wells St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
(414) 286-2238  
[milwaukee.gov/license](http://milwaukee.gov/license)

For a list of currently-licensed alcohol beverage establishments, or other licensing information, please visit:

[milwaukee.gov/license](http://milwaukee.gov/license)

Information about Common Council and Licenses Committee meetings is available at:

[milwaukee.legistar.com/calendar](http://milwaukee.legistar.com/calendar)

Information about Common Council files is available at:

[milwaukee.legistar.com/legislation](http://milwaukee.legistar.com/legislation)



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**PART 1** — Please read this before proceeding to the "Business License Revocation" brochure

## So You've Got a Problem Tavern? (or Business)



## Introduction

Places that serve alcohol are a part of the fabric of Milwaukee. From corner bars to crowded beer halls and nightclubs, this is, after all, a town that's been called "Brew City." Most of these places — officially called "alcohol beverage establishments" — are well run, orderly, and safe. This brochure, however, is for those instances when you and your neighbors feel a local establishment has gotten out of hand and is harming your quality of life.

## Two Important Things to Know

First, the Common Council doesn't have absolute authority over alcohol beverage establishments. The Wisconsin State Legislature has declared that the regulation of these establishments is a matter of "statewide concern." This means there are limits to what the City may or may not do as it attempts to regulate them. It is also because of this that there are sometimes elaborate procedures for not renewing, suspending or revoking an alcohol beverage license. Second, once a license to operate an alcohol beverage establishment is granted, that license is considered property, much like a house or a car. This means that the Common Council can't take the license away without providing the licensee due process of law.

## So what can you do if you believe a tavern is in violation of city ordinances?

- 1. Talk to the owner or operator.** This might seem obvious, but it is easy to overlook. Private, civil communication beats a formal process every time. Most owners want to be good neighbors and respond to the reasonable concerns of those around them.
- 2. Call the police.** Many things that happen at unruly establishments aren't just inconvenient, they're crimes. Make a record of when you call and about what. Records like that can be very helpful during the hearing process.
- 3. Communicate with your Common Council representative.** The general number is (414) 286-2221.
- 4. File a complaint.** These must be written and, in some cases, notarized. They should be filed with the License Division. The complaint can be brief, but should set forth the reasons you think warrant discipline against the establishment. Please be advised that if you don't mention a particular reason in your original complaint, that reason cannot be used against the establishment as grounds for discipline.
- 5. Attend a hearing.** Whenever a licensee is faced with potential discipline, he or she will be scheduled to appear before a meeting of the Common Council's Licenses Committee. These meetings are held at City Hall. They are almost always held during the day. Notices of these meetings are mailed in advance. It is extremely important that citizens attend and testify at these hearings. Unfortunately, merely submitting a letter for the record is not enough!

Hearings can be quite lengthy, but, again, the Common Council must safeguard the rights of license-holders. At a hearing, sworn testimony will be taken, evidence read into the record and, eventually, the members of the committee will make a recommendation to the Common Council. That recommendation will probably be heard at the next Council meeting. Please be aware that the recommendation is not final until the Common Council acts. It may accept, reject, or amend the recommendation.

*Members of the Licenses Committee value first hand evidence. You should testify to what YOU have seen and heard.*

**Important Note: Do not wait until the date on which a license is to expire to file your complaint!**