

Summary of Local Regulations for Alcohol Service and Operations for On-Premises Consumption

Policy	Belmont	Arlington	Lexington	Waltham	Watertown	Brookline	Medford	Newton	Sudbury
Can be served by any authorized staff	N - waiter only	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bottles or cans allowed	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Standing at the bar	N - seated only	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y (having a bar requires min 60 seats)	
With hors d'oeuvres or appetizers	N - full meal only	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N - full meal only	Y	Y
Without food	N	N	Y (Wine and malt beverage)	Y (total sales must be majority food)	Y	Y (must operate in good faith as a restaurant)	N	Y	Y
Without food service business	N	N	Y - must show enhances business	N	N	N	N	N	N
In a pitcher	N	N	Y	Y (min 2 people, until 1 hr before closing)	Y (min 2 people)	Y (min 2 people)		Y (min 2 people)	-

Cordials allowed under Wine / Malt Beverage license	N	N	-	Y					-
Allow recyclable or compostable dinnerware	N	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y
Electronic amusements / games allowed?	N	N	Y	Y (no card playing)	-	-	Y	-	-
Remove drinks	Earlier of 11p or 30 min after closing	30 min after closing	-	30 min after closing		at close		at close	at close
Patrons must leave	30 min after closing	60 min after closing	-	30 min after closing		15 min after closing		at close	15 min after closing
Allow significant counter seating?	N - review of ratio of counter to table seats	Y	Y	Y	Y	N - review for 1 : 10 ratio of counter : table seats	N - max is least of 15% seating capacity, 15% dining seats, 25	-	Y
Allow menu to be proposed after approval?	N - proposed menu must be submitted	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N - may be requested for review	N	Y
Allow alcohol brand signs on the	N	N	Y	Y (no prices)	Y	Y (only for items)	Y	Y	Y

exterior?						available for sale)			
Allow alcohol brand signs on the interior?	Y with SB approval	Y with SB approval	Y	Y	Y	Y (only items available for sale)	Y	Y	Y
Required to allow inspection at any time?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Required to cooperate with licensing authority on regulation requirements?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Require control of decorum around premises?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-
Hours (Minimum hours are 11a-11p	10a-11p M-Sa 12p-11p Su, Christmas, & Memorial Day	11a-12a M-Su	11a-12a M-Su Can request 12a-1a on NYE from Town Manager	8a-1a, M-Sa 1p-12a Su, legal holidays. If 100+ seats, option for 11:30a-12a	8a-1a M-Sa (12p-12a Su if 60%+ of sales incl food, and other req.)	10a-2a M-Su (8a-2a M-Sa by special approval) Min hrs 11a-11p M-Sa, 12p-11p Su	11a-1a M-Sa 12p-1a Su	Per application	Per application
Pay license fee electronically or by personal check?	N - certified or bank check only	Y - personal check	Y	-		Y	-	Y	-

Annual renewal deadline	Nov 30	Nov 15	-	-	-				-
All alcohol seats	min 60 max 250	min 50	18	-	-	-			-
Beer and malt beverage seats	min 39 max 125	min 19	18	-	-	-			-
All alcohol license fee	\$4,000	\$3,000 (can reduce by \$400)	\$3,500	\$3,000 7day \$2,400 6d	\$2,700 7day \$2,200 6d	\$3,600 close by 12a \$4,100 by 1a \$4,850 by 2a	\$2,000	\$3,250	\$3,500
Beer and malt beverage license fee	\$2,500	\$1,750 (can reduce by \$200)	\$2,500	\$1,650 7day \$1,375 6d	\$1,800 7day \$1,500 6d	\$2,000	?	\$2,250	\$2,500 (+ \$400 for liqueurs)
Application fee	\$750	\$100	\$100	-	\$100	5% of license fee (\$100 to \$242.50)	\$450	\$200	\$250
Renewal fee	\$250	\$100	\$100	-	-		\$50	\$200	\$100

Notes on Comparison Municipalities

Arlington

Arlington's policy begins with a goal oriented, principled vision supporting fine dining, a healthy mix of shops, vibrancy and commercial growth. The requirements are generally covered by 204 CMR, MGL and the application requirements follow the ABCC's application. Arlington conservatively budgets \$475k in meals tax revenue.

Lexington

Lexington's 5-page policy covers restaurants, events and craft beverage establishments. The requirements follow the common statutes, adding a detailed floor plan that clearly shows service and non-service areas. Lexington requires a training program for staff. Default service hours are defined, and extend past midnight for New Years. Automatic amusement devices (i.e. pinball machines) are allowed if licensed by the town and in compliance with MGC chapter 140 § 177A. Lexington budgets \$489k in meals tax revenue.

Waltham

Waltham's 5 page policy is clear, concise bullet points specifying requirements and restrictions. Most of the policy follows state requirements. The establishment's combined food and alcohol revenue must be at least 51% food revenue. There is an added requirement that booths and stalls cannot be obscured from view, and details requiring exits be clear and labeled. Staff rosters must be up to date and any factors that would change the license holder's application must be reported to the licensing authority. Waltham received nearly \$2M in meals tax for FY25.

Watertown

Watertown has comprehensive licensing policies, detailed application checklists, and a dedicated licensing board. Restaurants may serve alcohol M-Sa 8a-1a. The policies generally restate the state requirements. The policies detail the process for hearings and punishments for violations. Watertown publishes checklists for each license application. The annual budget projects about \$900k in meals tax revenue and \$118k in liquor license fees. New liquor licenses cost upwards of \$50k, recently reduced to spur more interest from restaurant owners.

Brookline

Brookline's policy references, with citations, state statutes and requirements. Detailed floor plans are required, and compliance with the Sign Bylaw. The board may approve alternate managers who will be responsible and in control of the premises when the manager is not present. Brookline conservatively budgeted \$1.5M in meals tax revenue for FY26.

Medford

Medford has many restrictions similar to Belmont's current regulations, such as requiring a full meal and the licensing authority may request the proposed menu as part of the approval process. Only one drink may be served at a time. A restaurant must have at least 60 seats to have a bar, and the number of seats at the bar is restricted. Parties waiting to be seated may be served up to 2 drinks total. Medford does not separate out meals tax revenue in the annual budget documents.

Newton

Newton requires food service, but does not specify a full meal is required. Policies generally follow state requirements, such as sanitary standards, capacity, access for officials, illumination, financial records, manager documentation and pricing. Alcohol must be served in open containers, with no more than two drinks at any one time. Newton budgeted \$2.6M in meals tax revenue for FY26.

Sudbury

Sudbury's regulations are little over a page and written in 1982. License holders can extend hours until 1a on Fridays and Saturdays if food is served and the kitchen remains open. The document is available online, but is archived. Sudbury received \$402k in meals tax revenue in FY24, and very conservatively budgeted \$276k for FY26.

Common Policy Points of Local Alcohol Regulations: Retail for On Premises Consumption

1. Restating requirements of
 - a. MGL Chapter 138 Alcoholic Liquors, and specifically Section 12: *Licenses authorizing sale of beverages to be drunk on premises; veterans' organizations, corporations, etc.; suspension or revocation; hours of sale; liqueurs and cordials; liquor legal liability insurance requirement.* <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXX/Chapter138>
 - b. 204 CMR (Code of Massachusetts Regulations): Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission (ABCC) <https://www.mass.gov/law-library/204-cmr> especially, but not limited to:
 - i. 204 CMR 2.00 Regulations of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission <https://www.mass.gov/doc/204-cmr-2-regulations-of-the-alcoholic-beverages-control-commission/download>
 - ii. 204 CMR 4.00 Prohibition of certain practices <https://www.mass.gov/doc/204-cmr-4-prohibition-of-certain-practices/download>
 - iii. ABCC advisories <https://www.mass.gov/lists/abcc-advisories-and-publications>
 - c. ABCC liquor license application
 - d. 105 CMR 590 Department of Public Health: State Sanitary Code Chapter X - Minimum Sanitation Standards for Food Establishments <https://www.mass.gov/regulations/105-CMR-59000-state-sanitary-code-chapter-x-minimum-sanitation-standards-for-food-establishments>
2. Include all Common Victualler application materials <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/912/Common-Victualler-New-Application-PDF>
3. Include all ABCC application materials, including all the required documents listed on page 1 <https://www.mass.gov/doc/application-for-a-new-license-retail-112024/download>
4. Require a detailed floor plan defining the service area, and if that service area includes outdoor space, the outdoor space complies with the outdoor dining policy. The service area cannot be expanded or reduced without approval.

5. Additional information and requirements for the Manager required by the ABCC application
6. Require cooperation with and access for local authorities in ensuring compliance with state and local regulations
7. Training and oversight (TIPS or similar training program). Example (Sudbury) training policy
<https://cdn.sudbury.ma.us/wp-content/uploads/sites/260/2014/08/AlcoholTrainingRulesRegsBOS2003.pdf?version=1c73d683a44f512f67fd2c8f15f9640e>
8. Additional restrictions and/or policies around service hours
9. Require food service to be offered everywhere and at every time there is alcohol service
10. Require operating primarily as a restaurant
11. Require being current on local fees and taxes
12. Restate required insurance with liquor liability. MGL c. 138 § 12 requires a minimum of “proof of coverage under a liquor legal liability insurance policy for bodily injury or death for a minimum amount of \$250,000 on account of injury to or death of 1 person, and \$500,000 on account of any 1 accident resulting in injury to or death of more than 1 person.”
13. Restating or expanding the required notices to abutting property owners specified in MGL c. 138 § 15A
<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXX/Chapter138/Section15A>
14. Application fee \$100-\$250, renewal fee of \$100
15. License fee of \$3,000-\$3,500 for all alcohol, and \$2,000-\$2,500 for wine and malt beverage

Additional Regulations in Belmont

1. Belmont Bylaw Chapter 60 Article 6: Noise. Especially Noise Zone I as defined in § 60-610 as residences, schools, health care facilities, libraries, places of worship, cemeteries, and/or subdistricts for open space. The maximum allowable exterior noise is 55 decibels 7a-10p, and 45 decibels 10p-7a. <https://ecode360.com/27111806#27111806>
2. Belmont Bylaws Chapter 60 Article 9: Licenses, Permits and Registration, and especially § 60-900F: Business licenses issued by Select Board <https://ecode360.com/28077440> which requires retail businesses be closed from 11p to 6a unless the Select Board approves a license for extended hours. <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5734/Extended-Hours-Permit-Request-PDF>
3. Zoning By-law § 5.2: Signs <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/734/Section-5-PDF> which prohibit moving and/or flashing signage. Window signs may not exceed 20% of the aggregate window area.

Application Process

Recent changes in MGL have streamlined the liquor license process. Applicants first apply to the Local Licensing Authority (LLA), and once the LLA has acted the ABCC will review the LLA's decision for approval. The LLA then issues the license once all fees are paid. Source: ABCC FAQ #2 The Select Board is the LLA in Belmont (MGL c. 140)

The ABCC published checklists for licensing handled by Local Licensing Authorities <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2025-lla-checklist/download>

General Rules and Regulations

- Alcohol licenses are subject to rules set by the Belmont Select Board, Massachusetts General and Special Laws, Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission Regulations, and other relevant laws.
- The Select Board may adopt additional rules and conditions that apply to both new and existing license holders.
- Licenses are contingent on compliance with Federal, State, and Municipal laws, including building/fire codes and Common Victualer License requirements.
- Licensees must ensure their property complies with all Town bylaws and codes.
- Licensees cannot discriminate against patrons based on race, color, creed, disability, nationality, sex, religion, sexual orientation, or any other state-prohibited basis.
- Non-compliance with the Select Board's regulations, Town bylaws, or other applicable codes can lead to the refusal, suspension, cancellation, or revocation of the alcohol license.