

## **Lexington Considering Outdoor Alcohol License**

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Downtown Lexington restaurants may soon be able to let customers roam around with alcohol if City Council approves an outdoor beverage license for Main Street Lexington.

Rebecca Logan of Main Street Lexington and Chief of Police Angela Greene fielded questions about a potential license at the Lexington City Council meeting Thursday night.

The license would create a special district in downtown Lexington where businesses could apply to serve and let customers walk about in a specified zone. It also would allow for people to carry alcohol outside during special events.

The applicants feel that the license would “help to bring additional business downtown, without starting a party on the street.”

The idea for the special district emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown when customers could not eat inside and had to distance themselves for safety.

The special district would require permits from the Alcohol and Beverage Commission and have special provisions for safety and enforcement from the Lexington Police Department.

“We wanted to include every restaurant in our commercial district and have flexibility to create events where everyone could participate from Nelson Street to Main Street,” Logan said.

Logan said Main Street Lexington has been working for over a year to see how to implement its plan.

“We have been working with Main Street Lexington, some other business owners, and the ABC officer to make sure we have everything in place from enough staffing to regulations ... [and to make] sure we have the answers to all the questions you may have,” Logan said.

Not just anyone can apply for use of the license; private groups like wedding groups cannot, and eligible groups must go through City Council and police procedures to be approved.

Each application would be assessed on a case-by-case basis to make sure there is enough police to work events with “final approval from the city manager and the city council,” Greene said.

Currently there are extensive safety measures in place to make sure no one who is underage is drinking.

“It [alcohol] has to be in a special cup, with a special logo, and they can walk around this designated area,” Councilman David Sigler said.

Main Street Lexington’s plan would add a new safety measure.

“Groups hosting the event will make sure establishments [businesses] will have wristbands” that signifies that that “person has been ID’d, they are legally allowed to have an alcoholic beverage, and are free to walk around.”

Councilwoman Marilyn Alexander emphasized how much the climate for approving such a license has changed in such a short time.

“I’m smiling because our police officers 15 and 20 years ago would never be able to wrap their heads around this,” Alexander said.

Main Street Lexington hopes that its inaugural event with the license will be the Freedom Food Festival covering two blocks of Main Street.

“We think that is probably the best event to try this out on because the rest of the events will probably be smaller,” Logan said.

The potential license will be discussed further at the next City Council meeting on April 21.