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MEMORANDUM

TO: Hon. Bristol Town Council
Steven Contente, Town Administrator
Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk

FROM: Amy H. Goins, Assistant Town Solicitor

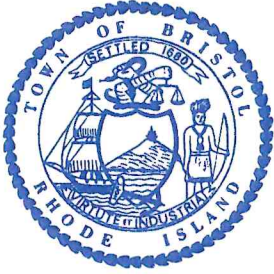
DATE: April 17, 2026

SUBJECT: Informal Survey of Rhode Island Municipalities re: Policies and Practices for Issuance of New Class B Liquor Licenses

The Council recently requested information on liquor license policies and practices in other Rhode Island municipalities to place its own policies and practices in a statewide context. As you know, the Council typically will not grant a full Class B liquor license to an applicant for a new license; rather, the Council usually chooses to grant a limited (beer and wine only) liquor license at the outset, and then may convert that license into a full liquor license after evaluating the licensee's initial months of operation. Town Clerk Cordeiro conducted an informal survey to determine whether other cities and towns utilize a similar phased approach to liquor licensing. Eighteen of the other 38 municipalities in Rhode Island responded to this request for information. Summaries of the responses received are attached to this memo.

It is our opinion that the Council may continue with the practice of imposing a 'waiting period' for a full Class B license if it deems this practice to be in the best interest of public health, safety, and welfare. The Rhode Island Supreme Court has noted that "the business of selling beverages, if permitted at all, is clearly and completely subject to the police power of the state in order that the health, morals and safety of the people generally may be protected against the evils of intemperance. In the exercise of that power the state may impose restrictions and burdens, however great, which the legislature may deem advisable to prescribe, so long as such provisions are not discriminatory or inconsistent with federal or state constitutional requirements." 28 Prospect Hill St., Inc. v. Gaines, 461 A.2d 923, 927 (R.I. 1983). The Council should ensure that if this practice continues, it is applied in a uniform manner to all applicants for Class B licenses.

Please let us know if you have any questions.



TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

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M E M O R A N D U M

To: Honorable Town Council

From: Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk

Re: Informal Survey - Municipal Liquor Licensing Practices
(Phased Approach)

Date: April 15, 2026

At the request of the Town Council, an informal survey was conducted to determine whether other Rhode Island municipalities utilize a phased approach to liquor licensing (e.g., requiring a 6-month limited license prior to issuance of a full liquor license), or if any other similar restrictions are in place. Out of 38 municipalities, responses were received from 18 communities. The findings are summarized below:

General Summary

- None of the responding municipalities reported using a phased or trial-period approach (such as requiring a temporary or limited license prior to issuance of a full liquor license).
- The majority of municipalities issue full liquor licenses without additional preconditions beyond standard application and review processes.
- Several municipalities noted license caps, while others operate without caps or apply flexible limits.
- A few municipalities have additional procedural steps or requirements, though not phased licensing.

Municipal Responses

- **Barrington** - No phased approach; requires additional training through the Barrington Substance Abuse Task Force; no cap
- **Coventry** - No trial period or special requirements; no cap
- **Cranston** - No trial period; additional approval required through Safety Services & Licenses Committee when exceeding cap; cap of 68 (flexible)
- **East Greenwich** - No trial or special requirements; cap of 39
- **Hopkinton** - No trial period or special requirements; no cap
- **Johnston** - No phased approach; no cap
- **Lincoln** - No trial or special requirements; no cap
- **Middletown** - No trial period or special requirements; no cap
- **New Shoreham** - No trial or special requirements; consistent with Bristol's licensing structure; no cap
- **North Smithfield** - No trial or special requirements; cap of 13 full liquor licenses
- **Pawtucket** - No formal policy; no cap
- **Portsmouth** - No trial or special requirements; no cap
- **South Kingstown** - No trial or special requirements; no cap
- **Tiverton** - No trial or special requirements; cap of 30
- **Warren** - No trial or special requirements; if exceeding cap of 32, applicant must request Council action to increase license count
- **West Greenwich** - No trial or special requirements; cap of 8
- **Westerly** - No phased approach; no cap

Footnote: Where listed as "No Cap," applicants are still required to request Council action to increase the license count.