



LAWRENCEVILLE

GEORGIA

AGENDA REPORT

MEETING: WORK SESSION, JULY 8, 2026

AGENDA CATEGORY: GENERAL CITY BUSINESS

Item:	Amendment to Alcohol Ordinance for updates to the Appeal Board
Department:	Finance
Date of Meeting:	Wednesday, July 8, 2026
Fiscal Impact:	n/a
Presented By:	Keith Lee, Chief Financial Officer
Action Requested:	Staff is requesting Mayor and Council feedback on proposed amendments to Chapter 4, Alcoholic Beverages, of the City Code to clarify the City's administrative appeal process for alcohol-related licensing decisions, including employee pouring permits.

Summary: Staff will present proposed updates to the City's alcohol ordinance to strengthen and clarify the administrative appeal process for alcohol-related licensing decisions. The current ordinance provides appeal rights in certain areas, including denial, suspension, or revocation matters, but the appeal structure would benefit from clearer language identifying the appeal body, its membership, its authority, and the procedure for hearings.

The proposed structure would establish an Alcohol Licensing Appeals Board to hear appeals from final administrative decisions under Chapter 4. The proposed board would consist of the Code Enforcement Director, the City Clerk or designee, and the Assistant Finance Director - Operations.

These positions were selected to provide an administrative review body that is knowledgeable about City operations but separated from the Finance staff responsible for issuing alcohol licenses.

The proposed amendments are intended to improve procedural clarity, protect due process, and give applicants, licensees, and pouring-permit applicants a clear path for review when an appealable administrative decision is made. The draft also clarifies notice requirements, filing deadlines, hearing procedures, burden of proof, board authority, recusals, alternate members, and judicial review.

This discussion does not change alcohol licensing standards, hours of sale, distance requirements, license qualifications, or enforcement expectations. The focus is procedural: making sure the ordinance clearly explains who hears appeals, how appeals are filed, how hearings are conducted, and what authority the appeal board has.

Background: Chapter 4 of the City Code governs alcoholic beverages within the City of Lawrenceville. The chapter includes provisions for alcohol licenses, employee pouring permits, operational requirements, inspections, audits, penalties, suspensions, and revocations.

The current ordinance already recognizes that certain alcohol-related decisions may be appealed. For example, Section 4-110 provides that no license shall be denied, suspended, or revoked without the opportunity for a hearing, and it also states that this provision applies to employee pouring permits. Section 4-145 also requires written notice when a pouring permit applicant is found ineligible and references the right to appeal.

However, the ordinance currently refers to a “Board of Appeals” without clearly establishing a dedicated alcohol licensing appeals board, defining its membership, identifying alternates, or fully describing the board’s authority in different types of appeals. That creates avoidable ambiguity, especially for pouring-permit denials or other administrative decisions that do not fit neatly into a license suspension or revocation framework.

The proposed amendment would create a defined Alcohol Licensing Appeals Board within Chapter 4. The board would hear appeals from final administrative decisions involving alcohol licenses, employee pouring permits, permits, approvals, suspensions, revocations, denials, administrative terminations, or refusals to renew, unless another appeal procedure is expressly provided by ordinance.

The proposed membership is designed to avoid having the same staff responsible for issuing licenses also serve as the appellate decision-maker. The CFO and Assistant Finance Director - Revenue are involved in the alcohol licensing function. For that reason, the proposed board uses the Code Enforcement Director, the City Clerk or designee, and the Assistant Finance Director - Operations. The City Attorney or designee would serve as legal advisor to the board but would not vote.

The proposed changes would also clarify the appeal process. An affected person would file a written appeal with the City Clerk within 15 calendar days after written notice of the decision. The board would conduct a hearing, allow the appellant to be represented by counsel, permit evidence and argument, and issue a written decision. The appellant would bear the burden of proof.

For pouring permits, the proposed language would make clear that a denied applicant may appeal to the Alcohol Licensing Appeals Board. It would also clarify that filing an appeal does not authorize the applicant to sell, serve, dispense, or handle alcoholic beverages unless and until the permit is issued.

The proposed amendment is intended to improve the ordinance's administrative durability. It gives applicants and licensees a clearer process, gives staff a more consistent procedure to follow, and gives the City a stronger record if a decision is later challenged.

Fiscal Impact: n/a

Attachments/Exhibits:

- Chapter 4 ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES – redline.docx