



118 Central Avenue North, New Prague, MN 56071
phone: 952-758-4401 fax: 952-758-1149

MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
CC: JOSHUA M. TETZLAFF, CITY ADMINISTRATOR
FROM: EVAN C. GARIEPY, PLANNER
SUBJECT: MESSAGE THERAPIST LICENSING INFORMATION
DATE: MARCH 23RD, 2026

Background

At the January 6th, 2026 City Council meeting, the Council requested that City Staff conduct research into massage therapy licensing.

The City of New Prague does not currently provide or mandate massage therapy licensing. The State of Minnesota does not provide or mandate massage therapy licensing. Minnesota is only one of five states in the Country that does not regulate massage therapists.

Within Scott County, every city mandates a massage therapy license, with the exceptions of Elko New Market and Credit River. Within Le Sueur County, none of the cities require massage licenses. St. Paul requires massage licenses, Minneapolis and Mankato do not.

Notably, in early 2025, 4 U Massage in New Prague was shut down due to allegedly facilitating prostitution. The owner pled guilty and received a felony charge for receiving profits from prostitution.

Detective Cadie Spicer with the New Prague Police Department stated that having unlicensed massage therapists often perpetuates sex trafficking. Victims are moved from one location to another, specifically set up within cities that do not require licensing. This is what happened in New Prague with 4 U Massage, and Spicer stated that she also saw it while working in Faribault and Northfield.

However, licensing therapists does not eliminate issues entirely. The City of Eagan requires massage therapist licenses, and in April 2025, charged a massage therapist with no prior criminal history on four sexual assault charges. Woodbury had a similar incident in 2023. Even though it is not foolproof, licensing can still prevent people with sexual assault charges from working as massage therapists and to help reduce the amount of sex trafficking victims who are forced to work in the field.

The American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA), the self-proclaimed largest association serving massage therapists, is in support of a state-wide licensing of massage therapists.

Potential State Massage Licensing

A bill has been introduced to the State Senate (SF 1131) and the House of Representatives (HF 362) called the “Minnesota Massage Therapy and Asian Bodywork Therapy Act.” This proposed bill would implement a statewide licensing program.

This proposed bill would require professionals to have educational experience and to carry insurance, with mandatory continued education and registration renewal every two years, in addition to a criminal background check. The bill would also create a singular body, a Massage Therapy Advisory Council, that reports of misconduct could be submitted to. A Commissioner would review all applications for licensing.

If the bill is to pass, the State massage licensure would “preempt the licensure and regulation of massage therapists or Asian bodywork therapists by a municipality, including, without limitation, conducting a criminal background investigation and examination of a massage therapist or Asian bodywork therapist, or applicant for a municipality’s credential to practice massage therapy or Asian bodywork therapy.” (Sec. 16 Subd. 1) Municipalities also may require background checks for owners of massage therapy businesses who are not registered as massage therapists themselves.

As proposed on March 13th, if passed, the bill would become effective on July 1st, 2028. The bill was passed from the Health and Human Services Committee to the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee of the State Senate for review, which has not yet been put on their schedule as of March 23rd. The Minnesota House of Representatives has referred the bill to the Health Finance and Policy Committee, and it is also not yet on their schedule for review.

The most recent version of the bill can be seen here:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/94/2025/0/SF/1131/versions/latest/>

Massage Education

As a requirement of licensing in most municipalities, proof of education is required. Massage schools that are accredited through the Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA) generally teach a comprehensive program, including anatomy, physiology, hygiene, ethics, theory, and involve physically practicing the work. This may culminate in a diploma or certificate.

Massage therapists may also be board certified on a national level by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB). In the states that require state-level licensing, you cannot be certified by NCBTMB without a state license. Becoming certified also requires an exam and a criminal background check. Some municipalities allow being board certified by NCBTMB as an alternative credential to an accredited diploma or certificate, as this requires either a diploma/certificate from an accredited school or portfolio review by the NCBTMB.

Without licensing requirements, people may operate as massage therapists without any training. This may result in unqualified practitioners, unhygienic workspaces, and a greater risk of injury to

clients. People with a violent or sexual criminal record may also practice as massage therapists without any oversight. Unlicensed massage therapists may also not carry insurance.

The City of Prior Lake

Under its City Ordinance Chapter 4 Article IV, the City of Prior Lake states that regulating massage therapists is necessary because the “experience from other cities demonstrates that commercial enterprises such as therapeutic massage, conducted in private by a member of the same or opposite sex who has not had any specialized training, are susceptible to operate in a manner contravening, subverting, or endangering the morals of the community, thus requiring licensing and regulation.”

The City of Savage

In Chapter 114 of its City Ordinance, the City of Savage states that “massage services provided by persons with no specialized and standardized training in massage can endanger citizens by facilitating the spread of communicable diseases, by exposing citizens to unhealthy and unsanitary conditions, and by increasing the risk of personal injury.”

The City of Shakopee

Chapter 116 of the City of Shakopee’s City Ordinance states that “in order to prevent or protect against the existence of illicit massage establishments or operations in the city and to protect the public’s health, safety, and welfare, including the protection of the city’s legitimate massage therapists’ profession and reputation, the city deems it necessary to regulate therapeutic massage establishments and massage therapists through the licensing process.”

Shakopee also requires business licensing for massage therapy businesses, which includes a background check.

Licensing Requirements

Most cities in Scott County have very similar requirements for their licenses. From looking at Prior Lake, Savage, and Shakopee, all three require criminal background checks conducted by the City Police Department alongside a scan of a driver’s license or other identification.

Prior Lake and Savage require renewal of licenses, with criminal background checks being renewed annually. Shakopee does not require renewals. Initial fees range from \$100-400, and renewal fees range from \$25-200.

The following are requirements seen in multiple license applications:

- All necessary information for a police background check;
- All prior addresses from the past 5-10 years;
- If the applicant has been denied a massage therapist license;
- If the applicant has had a massage license revoked or suspended;
- If the applicant has been involved in past criminal activity;
- All prior places of employment from the past 5-10 years;
- Proof of insurance for professional liability, typically for \$1,000,000;
- Proof of employment by a licensed business (Savage);

- A diploma or certification of graduation from an accredited massage program OR proof of working for 2 years full-time as a licensed massage therapist OR proof of NCBTMB board certification.

In the City of Savage, an annual renewal forum asks for the following:

- If the applicant has been involved in criminal activity;
- If the applicant has been involved with a massage business license that has been revoked or suspended;
- Proof of employment by a licensed business; and
- Proof of insurance for professional liability.

Notably, the City of Farmington requires a public hearing for every application to City Council, following a 10-day public notice period. I was unable to find any other local cities with this requirement, though cities often have an appeal process that involves going to City Council.

Recommendation

Discuss the City's potential role in massage therapy licensing.