



AGENDA REPORT

City Council Meeting

TODAY'S DATE: September 24th, 2025

MEETING DATE: October 1st, 2025

TO: Mayor Grimm, members of the Sandpoint City Council

FROM: Jason Welker, Planning and Community Development Director and Corey Coon, Chief of Police

SUBJECT: Amendments to Sandpoint City Code § 3-2-9 (Open Container Law)

INTRODUCITON:

The purpose of this staff report is to present proposed amendments to Sandpoint City Code § 3-2-9 ("Open Container Law"), which regulates the possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages in public spaces. These amendments expand the locations where alcoholic beverages may be consumed during permitted special events, clarify permitting and service requirements, and add language specifying restrictions around service area boundaries and ADA access.

DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND:

Under the current code, alcohol consumption is generally prohibited on sidewalks, rights-of-way, and in public parks except in specifically designated facilities, including in Farmin Park and at War Memorial Field. The intent of this ordinance has been to balance public safety and community standards with opportunities for controlled, permitted alcohol service at public events.

Over the past year, several event organizers have requested expanded options for hosting special events at other parks and facilities. Staff has worked with the Parks & Recreation Department, Police Department, and City Attorney to evaluate these requests and develop appropriate code amendments.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES:

The proposed amendments remove strikethrough language and add underlined language as shown in the attached draft. Key changes include:

- **New Facilities Added** – Three additional City parks/facilities will be eligible for alcohol service during permitted special events:
 - "within the buildings at 607 and 611 S. Ella Avenue in Lakeview Park (these are currently the Lions Club and BCHS facilities leased from the City)
 - "in the James E. Russel Sports Center at Travers Park," and
 - "at single-day events during the month of June, in an area not to exceed one (1) acre in the northwest corner of the interior lawn at City Beach Park (see Figure 1 below)"
 - Figure 1: City Beach Alcohol Service Area for Special Events



- **Expanded Service Definition** – Clarifies that beverages may be purchased, sold, or served (including complimentary service) by a vendor operating under a valid city-issued catering permit, explicitly allowing hosted or sponsored service.
- **Clearer Permitting Process** – Consolidates language to state that events must be approved through the City's standard event permitting process, rather than by individual staff or council approval on an ad hoc basis.
- **Designated Service Area Requirements** – Strengthens requirements that alcohol service areas must be shown on event site plans, be enclosed by City-approved barriers, and maintain unobstructed sidewalks and ADA access unless otherwise approved as part of a closure.
- **Seasonal Limitations** – Adds a requirement that certain locations (e.g., City Beach lawn) may host alcohol service only during the month of June.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

These amendments support the 2024 Comprehensive Plan by advancing the goals of:

- **Goal 2 – Recreation:** Enhance special events programming and improve access to facilities that foster community gathering and economic vitality
- **Goal 3 – Regional Economy:** Continue investing in parks and recreation facilities and programming as important quality-of-life considerations for residents and as a driver of tourism and seasonal events
- **Downtown Vitality & Vibrant Culture:** Encourage partnerships with local organizations to host events in public spaces and activate underutilized areas, fostering a lively community atmosphere

Furthermore, these amendments are consistent with the **Sandpoint Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2020)**, which calls for:

- **Implementation of Site-Specific Master Plans** – The Master Plan directs the City to implement adopted plans for War Memorial Field, City Beach, and Travers/Centennial/Great Northern Sports Complex, including activation of these spaces for community gatherings and events

- **Objective 2.2 – Enhance Special Event Programming** – The Plan explicitly recommends expanding and enhancing special event programming, including exploring new event opportunities that respond to seasonal and community themes
- **Key Issues & Recommendations** – Community input during the master planning process emphasized improving City Beach and the downtown waterfront to make them active, year-round destinations, and identified “enhance special events” as a recurring theme.

Together, these amendments help realize the Master Plan vision by enabling a broader set of park spaces to host alcohol-permitted community events in a safe, controlled manner — aligning with the goal of activating public spaces, supporting tourism, and strengthening Sandpoint’s sense of community.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

These amendments support the City’s goal of encouraging community events while maintaining public order and compliance with state alcohol laws. By expanding available locations, the City offers equitable opportunities for different event organizers. The clarified permitting process provides transparency and consistency for staff and applicants alike. Staff recommends approving the amendments, which will be brought to a subsequent council meeting as an ordinance for adoption.

ACTION:

Council may consider the following actions regarding the proposed amendments to Sandpoint City Code § 3-2-9 (Open Container Law):

1. **Adopt the Ordinance as Presented:** Approve the amendments as drafted, expanding the eligible parks/facilities and clarifying permitting requirements and service area controls.
2. **Adopt with Modifications:** Approve the amendments with specific changes as directed by Council (e.g., remove or add facilities, adjust seasonal restrictions, or revise service area requirements).
3. **Remand for Further Staff Work:** Direct staff to make additional revisions to the draft ordinance and bring it back for consideration at a future meeting.
4. **Take No Action:** Retain the current code language with no changes.

WILL THERE BE ANY FINANCIAL IMPACT? N HAS THIS ITEM BEEN BUDGETED? N

ATTACHMENTS:

Draft amendment to Sandpoint City Code § 3-2-9 (Open Container Law)