

Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department

To: Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Commission

From: Kristine Butteris, Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Director

Date: 6/9/25

Subject: Review the creation of SECTION 410-52(C) and the ammedment of section 410-52(b) of the city of watertown general ordinances

Background

Currently, Watertown Code of Ordinances Section 410-52(B) prohibits open containers of alcohol on the Watertown Riverwalk and surrounding public areas between the Cady Street and Milwaukee Street bridges. While this restriction remains important for general public safety and cleanliness, an exception is needed for designated community-use spaces, including the Watertown Senior and Community Center and Bentzin Family Town Square.

Both locations frequently host permitted or reserved private and public events where the lawful sale, service, and consumption of alcohol is an important part of programming, fundraising, and rental activities. The ordinance as currently written does not account for these scenarios, which also creates confusion for organizers and enforcement personnel.

The addition of Section 410-52(C) will provide necessary clarity and flexibility while maintaining appropriate control over public alcohol consumption.

SECTION 1: Amendment to Section 410-52(B)

The existing Section 410-52(B) shall be ammeded to read:

410-52(B)

No person shall have in their possession any open can, bottle, or other receptacle containing alcoholic beverages, nor drink from such can, bottle, or receptacle on the Watertown Riverwalk and the contiguous public property between the Cady Street Bridge and the Milwaukee Street Bridge along both the east side and west side of the Rock River.

SECTION 2: Addition of Section 410-52(C) – Exceptions

The following new section shall be added to the Code of Ordinances:

410-52(C) Exceptions

This section shall not apply to the Watertown Senior and Community Center or Bentzin Family Town Square, provided that:

- Alcohol sales and service comply with all applicable licensing requirements under Wis. Stat. Ch. 125.
- Consumption is restricted to the designated premises of the Watertown Senior and Community Center and Bentzin Family Town Square.
- This ordinance does not apply to otherwise lawful possession or consumption of alcohol during:
 - A lawfully permitted or reserved event at the Watertown Senior and Community Center or Bentzin Family Town Square.
 - Scheduled events or private functions hosted at either facility in accordance with City policies and event procedures.

These updates clarify the scope of enforcement regarding alcohol possession and allow reasonable exceptions for community events, rentals, and permitted functions in designated community spaces.

Budget Goal

Supports employee retention and growth, while also evaluating operations and the associated staffing

Financial Impact

This amendment is not expected to have a negative financial impact. In fact, the clarification may improve rental and event opportunities at the Senior and Community Center and Bentzin Family Town Square, potentially increasing revenues from permitted events and facility reservations

Recommendation

Approval of the ordinance amendment and the addition of the new exception section to support continued community programming, lawful alcohol-related activities during permitted events, and to reduce confusion among the public and enforcement officials.