

Date: September 17, 2008
To: Common Council and ALRC Members
From: Alcohol Policy Coordinator Katherine Plominski

Re: To enlist the Alcohol Policy Coordinator to develop improved notification procedures for establishments seeking new alcohol licenses or modifications to existing alcohol licenses.

RELEVANT ORDINANCES

MGO 38.05(3)(e) states:

Public Hearings Required. The City Clerk shall schedule public hearings before the Alcohol License Review Committee and the Common Council on:

1. The granting or transfer of Class A or Class B licenses and shall notify all property owners situated in the block of the site for which the license is sought and all property owners within a radius of three hundred (300) feet of the proposed site of the dates of the hearings. The notice shall be given at least ten (10) days before the hearing and *may be given by mail.* (Am. by Ord. 12,530, 2-10-00)
2. The application for a Sidewalk Café with a Class B liquor license and shall notify all property owners and residents within a radius of three hundred (300) feet of the proposed site of the dates of the hearings. The notice shall be given at least ten (10) days before the hearing and *may be given by mail.* (Cr. by Ord. 12,706, 11-9-00)

DISCUSSION

A. Current notification system

The Clerk's Office provides public notification of alcohol licenses in accordance with MGO 38.05(3)(e) in the form of a postcard mailed to property owners and tenants located within 300 feet of a new or transferred alcohol license. A list of property owners and tenants within the 300 feet radius is generated by the Planning Department upon request.

The postcard system has several flaws. Stacks of postcards are returned to the Clerk's Office each month marked as undeliverable. The postage fees sometimes outweigh the cost of the alcohol license. In addition, the postcard notification system is labor-intensive and property owners and tenants just outside of the 300 feet radius do not receive notification.

The City Attorney's office has opined that under State Law, the City cannot transfer these postage costs to the licensee.

B. Proposed Changes

After researching other forms of notification and after having several discussions with city staff, I concluded that the most efficient and effective method of public notification is a public notice sign supplemented by an electronic notification system. Due to the staff time and costs associated with the postcard mailings, the Clerk's Office has indicated a strong preference to eliminate the postcards and transition towards notification by signage.

i. Public Notice Sign

A public notice sign was designed and produced for use in the City of Madison, modeled after similar signs used in Pennsylvania. Each sign costs approximately \$2.00.

The 25" x 14.74" signs are printed on fluorescent orange 10 point card stock. The signs provide the same information contained in the postcard mailings with a few improvements. Specifically, the new signs contain the estimated capacity of the licensed premise as well as any additional licenses applied for, including an 18+ entertainment license or sidewalk cafe license.

The most significant addition is that of the information session, which all applicants will be strongly encouraged to host at least one week prior to the ALRC hearing date. The information session provides an opportunity for interested parties, including alders, police, fire, and neighborhood leaders, to see the establishment, review the business plan, and address the applicants with any questions, comments, or concerns.

ii. List-Serve / RSS

Sarah Edgerton from the Department of Information Technology was consulted regarding the creation of an electronic notification procedure. She recommended using the RSS Feed System in lieu of a separate list-serve. The RSS Feed System is already functional, and can be utilized for the purpose of public notification at no additional cost to the city.

Currently, residents can go to the City Clerk's website and click on a link to "Sign up to receive ALRC agendas." In the alternative, residents can register for the feed at <http://www.cityofmadison.com/rss/alrc.cfm>. Those who register will be automatically notified every time the ALRC agenda is posted, or amended.