



BOARD OF LIQUOR LICENSE COMMISSIONERS OF TALBOT COUNTY

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To License Holders of Alcoholic Beverages in Easton

Dear License Holder:

As you are undoubtedly aware, last year's **54th Waterfowl Festival** was a tremendous success by any measure. More than 30,000 individuals and families participated in this growing event and provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about both the Festival and the Town of Easton. The Festival generated nearly **\$6 million in economic benefits** for Easton, attracting visitors from neighboring states and communities and showcasing the outstanding quality of life, culture, and hospitality of Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Unfortunately, despite the Festival's 82% approval rating, not everything went according to plan. Talbot County's Compliance Officer, the Alcoholic Beverage Inspector, members of the Police Department, and other officials directly observed individuals consuming alcoholic beverages from open containers while walking on public streets and other public areas. These beverages were reportedly obtained from various licensed establishments as well as special and temporary license holders.

The tremendous success of the Festival and the large number of attendees overwhelmed our collective capacity to effectively manage and contain alcohol consumption in public places. While substantial planning efforts were undertaken by the Town of Easton, its agencies, and our dedicated license holders, additional measures are necessary to ensure compliance with the law and to preserve the reputation of both the Festival and the greater Easton community.

License holders and their staff play a critical role in preventing patrons from leaving licensed premises with alcoholic beverages in open containers. Accordingly, we are requesting your assistance and full cooperation in addressing this issue before it results in more serious consequences.

License holders intending to sell alcoholic beverages to Festival patrons for on-premises consumption, particularly in the downtown Easton area, are strongly encouraged to clearly identify any area where alcoholic beverages are sold, served, or consumed on the licensed premises—including buildings, decks, patios, and outdoor areas—and separate the same from adjacent private or public spaces through fencing, rope barriers, signage, or other suitable means. License holders are also strongly encouraged to designate one or more “gatekeepers” to actively monitor and control patron access to and from licensed areas. Additional staffing may be necessary to fulfill this responsibility. Lastly, license holders are also strongly encouraged to post signage advising patrons that open containers of alcoholic beverages may not be removed from the licensed premises.

The foregoing requirements are not entirely new and have been implemented by some license holders during particularly busy periods. They are also consistent with **Chapter 11 of the Talbot County Code governing Alcoholic Beverages** and apply to all classes of licenses.

As noted above, patrons were observed leaving licensed establishments with open containers, particularly through crowded entrances and exits leading to public streets and spaces. Due to the size of the Festival crowds, law enforcement officers were often required to direct these individuals to discard their beverages in public view. Preventing such occurrences at the point of sale and exit remains the preferred and appropriate solution.

Additionally, any business, club, or organization seeking a **Special Festival Endorsement** or a **Special and Temporary H or J License** for use during the Waterfowl Festival will be required to appear before the Board of License Commissioners. Applicants must provide detailed information regarding their plans to control patron entry and exit and prevent the removal of alcoholic beverages from licensed premises. Administrative approvals will not be available for these license types during the Festival period. Applications must be submitted no later than 30 days before the date of the Festival, or by October 9, 2026, in order to be considered by the Board of License Commissioners prior to the Festival.

Talbot County’s Compliance Department, Alcoholic Beverage Inspector, and local law enforcement personnel will actively monitor licensed locations to ensure compliance with these requirements. Additional enforcement measures may also be taken against individuals found possessing open containers of alcohol in public areas or while departing private gatherings.

The Board of License Commissioners and the Town of Easton appreciate your continued cooperation and support. By working together, we can ensure a safe, successful, and enjoyable Waterfowl Festival while protecting the reputation of our community and maintaining compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Board of License Commissioners