

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION
Library Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Discuss adopting a flexible process for waivers of serving alcohol at library events in Township owned libraries.

Prepared By: David Belanger, Director of Libraries

Date: July 6, 2018

- I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:** Provide direction to the Library Department and the Lower Merion Library System on seeking an amendment to the Township Code to provide greater flexibility in allowing alcohol at library sponsored events in Township owned libraries.
- II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:** Lower Merion Libraries require a waiver of Township Code § 111-4 in order to hold an event where alcohol is served in a Township owned library. In order to provide increased flexibility in granting exemptions, the Township Code would need to be modified.
- III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):** The current Township Code prohibits serving alcohol in Township owned facilities. Five of the six Lower Merion Libraries are Township owned buildings. In order to serve alcohol at special events or fundraising activities in the library, a special waiver is needed which is first reviewed by the Library Committee and then acted on by the Board of Commissioners.
- IV. Other Relevant Background Information:** Many libraries across the country have successful fundraising events such as wine or beer tastings in their facilities. Libraries have also held receptions to thank major donors and supporters of the library. Lower Merion Libraries would like to have the ability to hold such events in Township library buildings without being required to come back before the Board of Commissioners for every event.

In recent budget workshops, the Board has asked Library staff to investigate opportunities to increase Library fundraising revenue. Library staff and the Library Board of Directors are requesting this flexibility to hold fundraising events allowing the consumption of alcohol in the Libraries to accomplish this goal. Library staff will continue to investigate additional fundraising opportunities in the future.

A similar provision to allow alcohol is provided for the Parks and Recreation Department in the Township Code as follows:

§ 109-14 It shall be unlawful for any person in a park to drink or possess any alcoholic beverage, including beer or other malt beverages, except upon the

grounds of Appleford and Harriton pursuant to a permit. The Appleford Committee and the Harriton House Association are hereby authorized to issue such permits for the facility under their jurisdiction subject to any regulations which the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Lower Merion may approve and subject to the laws and statutes of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and regulations of the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. No intoxicated persons shall be permitted in a park.

An amendment to the Township Code could provide libraries a comparable simple process for approval. The Lower Merion Library System Board of Directors could serve as the agency authorized to issue the permit. If the Library Committee were to recommend moving forward with this option, an ordinance to amend the Township Code would be drafted and presented at a later date.

- V. Impact On Township Finances:** The change would allow alcohol to be served at special events in Township owned libraries. This would increase income from fundraising events and promote donor engagement with libraries. The funds raised by libraries are used to meet state standards for collection expenditures and provide income for activities in libraries. This results in less dependence on Township funds.
- VI. Staff Recommendation:** Staff requests direction from the Board on amending the Township Code.