Client Alert: MA Enacts Temporary 3 A.M. Last Call and Public Consumption Districts for World Cup

By Adam Barnosky on June 16, 2026



Governor Maura Healey signed Chapter 96 of the Acts of 2026, a temporary measure that lets Massachusetts cities and towns opt in to extended liquor-license hours and outdoor public consumption districts, effective June 8, 2026 and expiring on July 31, 2026. The Legislature moved quickly to give the restaurant and hospitality sector added flexibility ahead of a busy summer that includes FIFA World Cup matches at Gillette Stadium. Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, and Worcester have already approved local components of the temporary law.

Two features of the law, subject to local adoption:

1. One additional hour of on-premises service, capped at 3:00 a.m., upon application and local approval.
2. Municipalities may designate districts in which alcohol may be sold for consumption in public spaces.

Neither feature is automatic. Both depend on the municipality choosing to participate, and a city's or town's participation is entirely voluntary. Nothing in the law requires any establishment to extend its hours. More on extended hours and public consumption districts below.

Extended Service Hours:

An establishment holding an on-premises license under G.L. c. 138, Section 12 may sell alcoholic beverages for one hour beyond the closing time set in its license, but in no event later than 3:00 a.m.

- This is a one-hour extension measured from the license's existing closing time, not a blanket authorization to serve until 3:00 a.m.
- An establishment currently permitted to close at 2:00 a.m. may seek approval to close at 3:00 a.m. An establishment permitted to close at 11:00 p.m. may seek only the single additional hour, to midnight.
- The extra hour requires approval of the local licensing authority and remains subject to any applicable local rules and to any conditions placed on the license.
- The law does not expand the type or category of alcohol an establishment may sell. A licensee operating during the additional hour remains limited to the alcohol it is already licensed to sell, whether all alcohol or wines and malt beverages only.
- Boston has already opted in and is **accepting extension applications**. The Licensing Board for the City of Boston has opted in on behalf of the City and is accepting extension applications. Consistent with the structure of the statute, only licensees currently

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approved to close at 2:00 a.m. may apply for the 3:00 a.m. extension. All other Boston licensees may apply to extend up to one hour past their current closing time. The process is straightforward. Applicants complete a short online form covering basic establishment and license information, current and requested closing hours, acknowledgments, and emergency contact information, and the Board sends formal notice to approved licensees. No hearing appears to be required. Questions may be directed to the Board at 617-635-4170 or **licensingboard@boston.gov**.

Public Consumption Districts

A local licensing authority may designate one or more areas in which alcoholic beverages are permitted to be consumed in public spaces, subject to whatever restrictions the city or town considers appropriate, through July 31, 2026.

- Only licensed establishments located within a designated district may sell alcohol for consumption in that district, and only beverages sold by those participating establishments may be consumed there.
- Cities and towns control the boundaries of any district, decide which businesses may participate, and set the applicable conditions.

What licensees can do now

Establishments interested in extending hours or participating in a public consumption district should contact their local licensing authority promptly to confirm whether the municipality is opting in and to learn what the local approval process entails.

- Extending Hours: licensees should review their liquor liability and general liability coverage for any limitations tied to hours of operation, confirm that staffing and responsible-service training such as TIPS accounts for a later close, and consider the transportation and scheduling implications of a 3:00 a.m. closing for employees.
- Public consumption districts: confirm liquor liability and general liability coverage reaches off-premises, open-air service within a district. Note any specific local conditions on hours, location, signage, and enforcement. Participating licensees should approach an outdoor district as a higher-risk service environment than a controlled premises and should plan accordingly. Age verification and responsible service deserve particular attention. Sales to minors and visibly intoxicated patrons remain prohibited under G.L. c. 138,

The full text of the new law can be found **here**.

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