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TOPICAL

ALERT

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## New alcohol laws to bring game day changes, too

By Adam Troxtell | Transcript Staff Writer Aug 5, 2018



Beer fills the coolers at Joe's Place, a liquor store at 1330 Alameda St. The coolers will be turned on when new state laws take effect on Oct. 1.

Mack Burke / The Transcript



Right about now, Sooner fans are probably pumped to get back into their game day routine of heading to Campus Corner, grabbing a beer from one of the vendor tubs on the street and walking around with relative ease.



Well, not so fast, there; 2018 is going to be a bit different thanks to the new alcohol laws coming into effect.

Members of the Campus Corner Merchants Association and business owners in the surrounding area were invited to a presentation on the impact of State Question 792 on local alcohol sales at council chambers toward the end of last month. Of course, this is the state question that will allow retail stores to serve beer and wine, and it will allow retail and liquor stores to serve chilled full-point beer.

Some local liquor stores have already installed coolers to prepare for when they can sell the strong stuff on Oct. 1. But the new law also means serving alcohol at special events like OU game days will change.

Above all else, permitting for the law change and special events at which alcohol will be served is going to be different, and City Clerk Brenda Hall said those business owners who haven't started that process are already behind.

"The entire state of Oklahoma is gearing up for this," Hall said.

To clear some things up, here's what will be different about the permitting and license process and how the look of game days will change under the new law:

## **Permits**

Currently, the Alcoholic Beverage Laws Enforcement Commission (ABLE) does not monitor low-point beer, which can be sold cold at super markets, gas stations and out of the tubs of caterers on Campus Corner during game days.

As of Oct. 1, ABLE's jurisdiction extends over the sales and purchases of all alcohol, anything with a 0.05 percent alcohol content or higher. And all beer will be taxed the same.

"Beer is beer," Lt. Karen Tipton, from ABLE, explained.

In order to sell alcohol, businesses will need their usual city permits, as well as a license from ABLE. Both of these documents must be secured by Oct. 1 for businesses to sell alcohol.

The old Class I and Class II alcohol licenses will no longer apply as of that day.



“Anyone who has Class I or Class II beer licenses, if you want to continue to sell beer, you’re going to need new licenses as of Oct. 1,” Hall said.

Retail stores who sell for off-premises consumption may obtain a beer license for \$500, a wine license for \$1,000, or both. On premises consumption sites may obtain a mixed-beverage permit for \$1,000, a combo mixed beverage/caterer permit for \$1,250 or simply a strong beer and wine permit for \$500.

In addition, all retail employees who stock, handle or sell alcohol must have an employee license through ABLE and must go through training. Currently, this is not required for retail stores who sell chilled low-point beer because, again, it does not come under ABLE’s purview.

On-premise consumption locations — such as bars and restaurants — may serve alcohol between 8 a.m. and 2 a.m., on any day. Off-premise consumption locations like super markets can sell from 6 a.m. to 2 a.m. on any day.

Sunday’s are still off limits for liquor stores, but they do receive extended hours. Liquor stores will be able to open at 8 a.m. and sell until midnight. They can also sell additional items that are not alcoholic, something that was not allowed under the old laws.

## **Game days**

The days of walking up to a caterer tent on Campus Corner, grabbing a low-point beer for a few bucks out of a tub and then walking around freely are, essentially, over.

“This is going to be the game changer for all of you on game day,” Hall explained to the Campus Corner merchants.

Special event permits will be required to sell alcohol outside during game days, and that’s where the first sticking point resides for Campus Corner businesses. Among the event permits available through ABLE is the “annual permit,” though it allows for a maximum of six events in a year.

The number of OU home games this season is seven.

“If you were getting a public event license for all seven games, you’d get the annual license and then you’d have to get an additional one-time license for the seventh,” Hall said.



The first home game for OU this year after the new alcohol laws officially come into effect is Oct. 27 against Kansas State. But Scotty Jackson, owner of Appletree Chocolates and president of the Campus Corner Merchants Association, said the business owners agree they don't want a mid-season change to the routine.

So the plan is to have a special event permit secured from the very beginning, starting Sept. 1 against Florida Atlantic. The Campus Corner association is already working toward obtaining that permit.

"We're working very hard to be ready for this," Jackson said. "We're not going to try and flip it come Oct. 1. We're going to try to start Sept. 1 with the event licensing. It might seem like organized chaos from our end. It'll be moving a mile-a-minute, but appear calm on the surface, hopefully."

And on that game day, fans can expect to find the main requirement of a new ABLE special event permit: the area in which alcohol will be served outside must be closed off, and no one is allowed to bring alcohol in, nor are they allowed to take alcohol out.

"As the public event host, you would be required to make sure that area is fenced off but guarded to make sure no one is coming in or out with alcohol," Hall said.

This also applies to patrons going in and out of the restaurants, bars and retail stores on Campus Corner on the special event route. They are all considered outside the permit area, so any alcohol obtained inside that area must be consumed there, and alcohol obtained inside an establishment cannot be taken out and into the permit area.

That regulation could be important when drawing out the map for the special event permit area, which has to be submitted to ABLE along with the permit application. One example that came up in the meeting was Campus Corner Market, which sells alcohol for off-premise consumption.

But if the streets outside of it are considered inside the special event permit area, alcohol purchased at the store couldn't be taken outside, either.

So in that event, a customer who purchased an alcoholic drink at Campus Corner Market during game day would be stuck there with a beverage they're not allowed to open. It would be best to leave the market and the streets around it outside of that special event permit area.



Fans carrying or rolling a cooler full of alcoholic beverages through the Campus Corner area on their way to a tailgate need not fear. It is perfectly legal to still carry alcohol in the area, so long as they do not enter the special event.

And tailgating remains unaffected because the new law only applies to alcohol sales and purchases.

Jackson said the newness of the law will likely cause confusion, but he is hopeful everyone will steadily get used to the way things work. By launching the new setup on game one, there's time to get in the rhythm.

"It's going to be an educational process for us," he said. "We were in there for an hour and a half, and I'm slightly less confused than I was when I went in. The public is going to need to be more educated, too. There's a lot of confusing aspects. We'll have a little bit of time to get organized. There will be a learning curve."

## **Game Days**

**Now    Oct .1**

Buy low-point beer, walk around    Buy high-point alcohol, must stay in event zone

Walk into Campus Corner establishments with drink\*    Must consume drink in event zone before walking inside bars/restaurants/stores

## **Purchasing alcohol**

**Now    Oct. 1**

High-point alcohol only in liquor stores, not chilled    High-point beer/wine can be chilled, bought at liquor store or retail establishment

Liquor stores open at 11 a.m., close at 9 p.m.    Liquor stores can open at 8 a.m., sell until midnight

ABLE does not regulate low-point beer    ABLE regulates all alcohol, 0.05 percent ABV or higher

\*Businesses have the right to refuse entry with an outside drink; as of Oct. 1, it will be against the law to do this on game days depending on boundaries of the special event permit area