

ITEM #: 25
DATE: 08-26-25
DEPT: POLICE

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: 8-MONTH CLASS C RETAIL LICENSE - LA CASA MAYA, 631 LINCOLN WAY, CLASS C RETAIL ALCOHOL LICENSE WITH OUTDOOR SERVICE

BACKGROUND:

State alcoholic beverage licenses and permits must receive approval by the local authority (City Council), before they can be issued by the State. On July 22, 2025, the City Council denied the application for renewal of a 12-month license for La Casa Maya, 631 Lincoln Way, for the following reasons:

- The Police Department conducts compliance checks on establishments that hold liquor licenses in the City of Ames. These compliance checks are completed by taking an underage person to liquor licenses establishments who then attempts to purchase alcohol. A business passes the check if the employee asks for identification and rightly refuses the purchase. An establishment fails the compliance check if the employee sells to the underage person. In the 12 month period prior to the denial, La Casa Maya failed two out of three compliance checks.
- The first failed compliance check occurred on 11/22/2024. After the failure, the restaurant co-owner was encouraged to attend the Police Department's ID training, download the Iowa Age to Purchase app, and to take the I-PACT (Iowa Program for Alcohol Compliance Training) online training.
- The second failed compliance check occurred on May 2, 2025. The establishment was again encouraged to attend bar meetings, trainings, and utilize other tools.
- After both failures, a letter was sent to the establishment to ensure they were aware of the failures. On June 26, 2025, a follow up compliance check was conducted and La Casa Maya passed this check.
- Since the first failed compliance check, the Police Department held two ID training sessions, one in February and one in May. No employees from La Casa Maya attended those trainings. In preparation for the report to Council in July, the manager, Felipe, was contacted about the performance of the establishment. He confirmed that he knew about the failed compliance check failures and that the department had offered ID training and quarterly bar meetings. Felipe said no training has been provided to the employees beyond managers telling employees to check IDs. Based on this information, the Chief of Police recommended denying the renewal application in July.

Since the denial, the establishment has provided documentation of its staff completing the State of Iowa I-PACT training and the Police Department offered ID training at the establishment that was attended by employees. It appears the establishment is making a good faith effort to improve its performance. The Chief of Police also encourages the establishment's management to attend quarterly bar meetings when they occur and to

ensure that their staff attend further ID trainings.

The Chief of Police is recommending approval of their 8-month license application. An 8-month license will give the Police Department a shorter period of time to evaluate their commitment to improvement. If there are serious issues prior to their next application, that information can be provided to Council for potential action.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the application from La Casa Maya for an 8-month Class C Retail Alcohol License with Outdoor Service.
2. Deny the application for an alcohol license from La Casa Maya.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Since the denial of the renewal application in July, the establishment has worked with the Police Department to provide both I-PACT training and Police Department sponsored ID training at the establishment demonstrating a commitment to improvement. An 8-month license will give the Police Department a shorter period of time to evaluate their commitment to improvement. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council support the recommendation of the Chief of Police to approve Alternative No. 1, as noted above.