



PRIVATE CLUBS

Introduction

This rule outlines the information required from a licensee when submitting an application for a City business license for the activity of a private, social club or organization operating from a commercial location to ensure public health, safety and welfare as outlined in Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) and to verify exemption from Chapter 6B.80 – Entertainment License.

Private Clubs typically:

- Require individuals to become members before they can access the club's facilities and services. The club may have eligibility criteria for membership, such as age restrictions or other qualifications.
- Often have bylaws or rules and regulations that outline the rights, obligations, and privileges of members, as well as the governance structure of the club. These bylaws may address matters such as membership fees, voting rights, code of conduct, and rules for the use of club facilities.
- Limit access to their facilities and services to members and their guests. This distinguishes them from public establishments that are open to the general public.
- Charge membership dues and may have additional fees for specific services, facilities, or events. The payment of these dues and fees helps support the club's operations and maintenance.

Definitions

“Bona fide private club” means a person operating as a non-profit organization solely for objects of social or business purposes with an established membership, and when admission is not open to the public, and in which membership is by application and regular dues are charged, and the advantages of which club belong to members, and the operation of which is not primarily for monetary gain. (TMC 6B.80.020)

Records

A bona fide club will have records of (i) membership, (ii) meetings of trustees or directors at regular intervals and membership meetings at least once a year and, (iii) the location of such meetings.

The constitution, bylaws and/or house rules may provide, among other things:

1. That all classifications of members must be admitted only after written application and only after investigation and ballot. Such admissions must be duly recorded in the official minutes of a regular meeting.
2. Standards of eligibility for members.



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3. Limitation on the number of members consistent with the nature of the organization or club.
4. That not more than twelve honorary members be admitted in any one calendar year, and that nonresident and associate members be restricted to numbers consistent with the nature of the organization or club.
5. Reasonable initiation fees and dues consistent with the nature and purpose of the organization or club.
6. The period for which dues shall be paid and the date upon which this period shall expire.
7. Reasonable regulations for the dropping of members for the nonpayment of dues.
8. Strict regulations for the government of organization or club rooms and quarters generally consistent with its nature and character.
9. That organization or club rooms and quarters must be under the supervision of a manager and house committee, which committee shall be appointed by the governing body of the organization or club.
10. Provisions for visitors and for the issuance and use of guest and courtesy cards.

Private Clubs – Serving Alcohol

Private clubs may not serve or sell alcohol without a [Private Club License](#) or [Special Occasion License](#) issued by the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board.

Bona Fide Club Exemption (TMC 6B.80.035.E)

To be eligible for the exemption in 6B.80.035.E a licensee must submit records to support the licensee meets the definition of a “bona fide club”.

Note: A club that provides live entertainment and sells, serves, or consumes alcohol on club premises does not qualify for an exemption under 6B.80 and instead must obtain a Club license as outlined in Chapter 314-40 WAC from the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board and apply for a license under TMC 6B.70 – Entertainment/Dancing – Alcohol Served.

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