

A public health perspective on Article 7

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A quick history

The sale and consumption of alcohol on town property (buildings and land) had been against the law for decades.

- Before 2005, Milton was a “dry” town.
- Changing that law allowed us to have the wonderful destination dining options that we enjoy and that help to increase our town’s revenue.

But the restriction of alcohol on town property remained.

Despite the bylaw, in recent years and there have been events where alcohol was available on town land. After a few years of this, someone noticed that it was actually against the law. And that is why the alcohol bylaw came to last February's Town Meeting.



Photo credit:
Milton Art Center Facebook page

At last February's Town Meeting, we ultimately approved alcohol sale and consumption in town buildings but not on town land, by a close vote.

- Public safety - immediate effects.

“We did it (sold and consumed alcohol outside) for years and nothing bad ever happened.” - supporter of the February 2025 alcohol article.

- Public health - long term effects.

Public health is about prevention. It can be hard to wrap your head around because when it works there is nothing to see.

**Public health efforts around the world have
saved more lives than have been lost by all
wars combined.**

Preventive efforts have reduced or eliminated :

smallpox

cholera

flu

typhoid

polio

lung cancer

rotavirus

tooth decay

stroke

rickets

food borne illnesses

STDs

cancers

workplace accidents

childhood lead

motor vehicle fatalities

poisoning

and many more

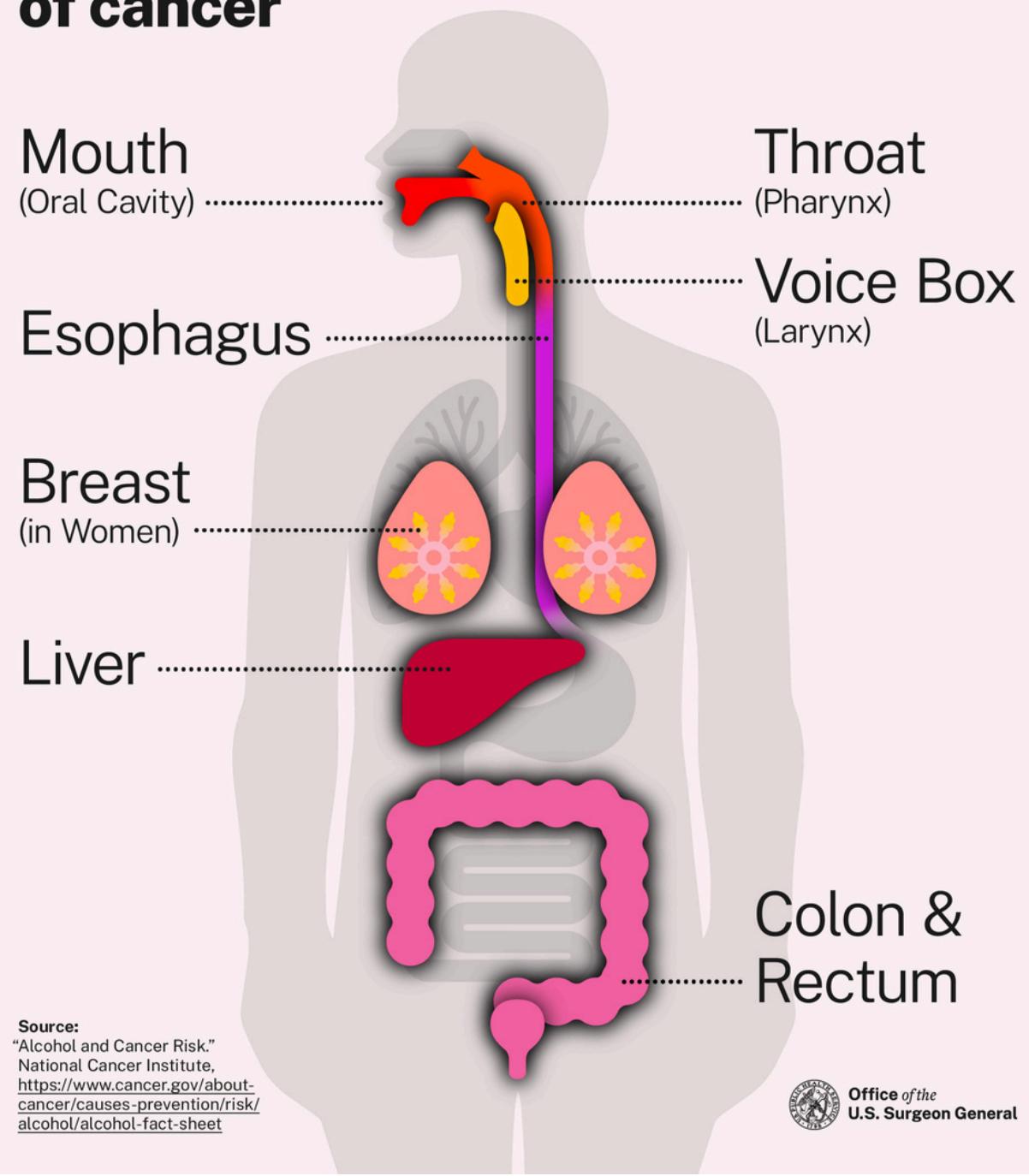
Public health takes community effort.

When we all embrace public health strategies (speed limits, vaccinations, seat belts, pollution regulations, limiting youth access to alcohol, as examples) we can have a safer and healthier world for everyone.



Why is alcohol a public health concern?

Consuming alcohol increases the risk of developing at least 7 types of cancer



Alcohol also contributes to violence, suicide, depression, and individual and family trauma.

Milton is not immune.

- **Alcohol is the most commonly used drug in Milton among youth. (2024 YRBS, MHS)**
- **Milton adults consider alcohol to be a top health challenge. (Milton Community Health Assessment, 2024)**
- **14% of older adults in Milton drink excessively vs. 9% in MA (MA Aging Profile Report)**
- **In MA (2019) 55,050 ER visits were alcohol related.**
- **In 2019, alcohol-related disorders were among the top 10 most common primary diagnoses in MA (Alcohol, Health and Safety in Massachusetts: A Status Report, 2022)**

**Alcohol policies impact the
health of our community.**

**They should be informed
by public health evidence and goals.**

We provided evidence-based strategies to reduce public health harms from alcohol to the Select Board and the Warrant Committee. Some of those are included in Article 7.

However, it doesn't go far enough to protect our youth.

The public health goals of our amendment

- support the enforcement of minimum legal drinking age.
- limit youth exposure to alcohol.

All clauses in our amendment work together to provide clear and unambiguous public health guidelines for one-day liquor licenses.

Enforcement of the minimum legal drinking age is an effective strategy for reducing underage sales and consumption. To do this, Milton should:

- **Designate space for the sale and consumption of alcohol**
- **allow access only to those 21+**
- **require wristbands**

This is important because people who start drinking earlier in life have a higher risk of using alcohol excessively or developing an alcohol use disorder later in life.

Limit Youth Exposure

We also recommend an additional clause, **“No such one-day licenses shall be issued for Town Land that includes a playground”** to help limit youth access and exposure to alcohol.

Some of the evidence consulted for our policy recommendations

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025). **ENGAGE: Evidence-Based Strategies to Prevent Youth Substance Use.**
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). **Preventing Alcohol-Related Harms.**
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). **Preventing Excessive Alcohol Use with Proven Strategies.**
- Community Preventive Services Task Force. (2024). **Excessive Alcohol Consumption: Findings and Recommendations.**
- Siegfried, N., & Parry, C. (2019). **Do alcohol control policies work? An umbrella review and quality assessment of systematic reviews of alcohol control interventions (2006–2017).** PLoS ONE, 14(4), e0214865
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2020). **State Performance & Best Practices for the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking 2020.** Rockville, MD: SAMHSA.

We, a group of highly qualified public health practitioners, have worked hard to draft a bylaw for you that will protect the health of our community, especially our youth, at events with alcohol.

Please vote yes on this amendment.