



DEPARTMENT OF
**PUBLIC
HEALTH**

MEMORANDUM

Date: 3/4/2025

To: Board of Health and Common Council

From: Charles E Sepers, Jr, PhD, Health Officer/Director

Subject: Noise Variance Fee Schedule Proposal

Purpose and Background

The process of issuing noise variances—which temporarily suspend the noise ordinance for events exceeding the Municipal Code's noise limits, typically for live music—remains time-consuming for staff despite multiple process improvements, automations, and policy revisions. Noise variances granted to retail food establishments serving meals and taverns have led to frequent neighbor complaints, requiring technical assistance and mediation by city staff. Nevertheless, live music and special events remain vital pillars of cultural expression and entertainment, contributing significantly to Appleton's thriving tourism economy.

As part of the Appleton Common Council's Approval of the 2025 budget, a new revenue line item for noise variance fees to the Appleton Health Department was approved. After much deliberation, comparison of comparable communities, and internal and external stakeholder discussions, the noise variance fee schedule is presented to the Board of Health and Appleton Common Council for consideration.

Fee Schedule

\$75 per month for any noise variance requests covering a calendar month, (regardless of whether residential or commercial). There is no limit on the number of days that can be included within a single monthly variance. Requests spanning multiple months will require separate variances at \$75 per month.

\$50 per week for any noise variance request covering a single calendar week (regardless of whether residential or commercial). For weekly requests, there is no limit on the number of days requested within that week. Requests for multiple weeks in the same month may instead be processed as a monthly variance at \$75 per month.

\$25 per day for any noise variance request covering a single day (regardless of whether residential or commercial). If multiple dates are requested within the same calendar week (Monday–Sunday), the weekly rate of \$50 will apply.

The following entities would be exempt from the fee schedule, but would otherwise be subjected to the terms outlined in the Appleton Municipal Code:

- Non-profit entities
- Special Event License holders
- Those renting park or pavilion amenities through the Department of Parks and Recreation
- Conditional Noise Variances as approved by the Board of Health

Recommendation

We request that the Common Council, by way of the Board of Health, adopt the proposed noise variance fee schedule. The fee schedule, outlined here, will achieve the projected revenue approved by the Common Council within the 2025 Budget.