

3
4
5 **A RESOLUTION**

6
7 Calling upon the State of Wisconsin to amend its statutes to allow for counties and
8 municipalities to sell all types of alcohol in public parks
9

10
11 WHEREAS, Milwaukee has a proud tradition and culture of responsible alcohol
12 consumption, particularly in picturesque locations, dating back to the German-influenced
13 *biertagens* or “beer gardens” of the late-Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Centuries; and
14

15 WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin has imposed a structural deficit on local
16 governments in Wisconsin, whereby the costs to continue the services citizens expect
17 and deserve rise higher based on inflation than do the percentage of State shared
18 revenue increases which are typically less than one percent per year (File Nos. 18-944,
19 19-161, & 22-457); and
20

21 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County at present is on a fiscal trajectory under the
22 State-imposed local government finance restrictions that before the decade’s end, State
23 mandates will consume all of Milwaukee County’s ability to generate revenue locally,
24 leaving no local moneys for “non-essential” services like the Milwaukee County Transit
25 System or Milwaukee County Parks; and
26

27 WHEREAS, in File No. 20-639, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture
28 noted, “Milwaukee County Parks is at cross-roads and the funding mechanisms to
29 sustain our parks are broken. This time of global pandemic has magnified and
30 accelerated the reality that the fiscal model that has funded Parks for years is failing,
31 that it is not sustainable, and that new, long-term funding solutions are needed.”; and
32

33 WHEREAS, in the October 2021 WPF study, “Sinking Treasure: A look at the
34 Milwaukee County Parks’ troubled finances and potential solutions,” the WPF noted
35 how in inflation-adjusted terms, the County’s parks have experienced significant cuts
36 financially and staff-wise while becoming further dependent on earned revenue rather
37 than the property tax levy:
38

- 39 • Operations Expenditures in 2019 Dollars
 - 40 ○ 1989: ~\$75 million
 - 41 ○ 2019: >\$40 million

- 42 • Number of Full-time Equivalent Positions
- 43 ○ 1989: 1072.7
- 44 ○ 2019: 469
- 45 • Parks Department Revenue Mix
- 46 ○ 1989: 74.4 percent property tax levy, 25.6 percent other revenue
- 47 ○ 2019: 43.4 percent property tax levy, 56.7 percent other revenue

48
49 (File No. 21-973); and

50
51 WHEREAS, the sale of wine at Milwaukee County Parks such as at Humboldt
52 Park’s “The Vine,” in addition to beer, has been instrumental as a form of earned
53 revenue in financing Milwaukee County Parks operations, contributing the following
54 amounts in previous years:

- 55
- 56 • 2019: \$105,476
- 57 • 2020: \$88,105
- 58 • 2021: \$163,712

59
60 ; and

61
62 WHEREAS, for more than 20 years the Department of Parks, Recreation and
63 Culture had been selling wine under an interpretation of Wis. Stat. §§ 125.06(6) and
64 125.09(6) relating to the sale of alcoholic beverages in municipal and county parks, until
65 the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and
66 Explosives and the Wisconsin Department of Revenue informed the Department it was
67 not permissible under Wisconsin law; and

68
69 WHEREAS, the inability to sell wine and other forms of alcohol hinders the ability
70 of Milwaukee County Parks facilities to gain revenue by serving as wedding venues in
71 naturesque locations, as it is customary for wine and other forms of alcohol to be served
72 at weddings, which will lead prospective fiancés to go elsewhere, resulting in Milwaukee
73 County losing revenue in future years; and

74
75 WHEREAS, 2015 Wisconsin Assembly Bill 404, introduced with bipartisan
76 support, along with the support of the Wisconsin League of Municipalities, would have
77 enabled under Wis. Stat. §§ 125.06(6) and 125.09(6) the county and municipal
78 exception of all alcoholic beverages, not solely beer, but failed to advance and
79 subsequently died at the end of the legislative session; and

80
81 WHEREAS, being able to purchase various forms of alcohol at public parks on
82 family outings or while engaging in recreational activities is something people have

83 come to expect, and any opponents need not fear competition from public parks as
84 family park outings and recreational activities where alcohol happens to be sold are
85 different than the clientele who patronize taverns for the purpose of socializing and/or
86 watching sporting events or other forms of entertainment, and parks do not typically
87 operate during the times when most people customarily patronize taverns; and
88

89 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County's attempts at fiscal self-sufficiency and revenue-
90 generating alternatives to taxation continue to be thwarted by State law, even while
91 State law and mandates reduce the capacity for Milwaukee County to provide the
92 services its citizens expect and deserve, including quality parks with amenities residents
93 have come to expect; and
94

95 WHEREAS, the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, at its meeting of
96 September 12, 2022, recommended adoption of File No. 22-957 (vote 4-0); now,
97 therefore,
98

99 BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County hereby calls upon the State of Wisconsin
100 to amend Wis. Stat. §§ 125.06(6) and 125.09(6) to allow counties and municipalities to
101 sell all types of alcohol in municipal or county parks as it was written in 2015 Assembly
102 Bill 404; and
103

104 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Office of Government Affairs staff is authorized
105 and requested to communicate the contents of this resolution to the Wisconsin Counties
106 Association, the Wisconsin League of Municipalities, the Tavern League of Wisconsin,
107 the Wisconsin Governor, and State policymakers, and support legislation that achieves
108 the criteria outlined in this resolution.
109

110
111 09/12/22
112 s:\committees\2022\september\igr\resolutions\22-957 clancy sell alcohol in parks.docx