



## Column: Big plays, 5 things learned from Iowa OC Lester

SPORTS, 1B

# IOWA CITY Press-Citizen

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## City denies Union Bar and Grill's liquor license

**Jessica Rish**  
Iowa City Press-Citizen  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Iowa City City Council has denied the Union Bar and Grill's request to renew its alcohol license for allegedly violating zoning regulations.

The vote follows the city staff recommendation, which determined Union Bar and Grill meets the zoning definition of a drinking establishment due to its

late-night hours. Under Iowa City law, bars in the central business district must be at least 500 feet from other drinking establishments.

The council voted unanimously to deny the business's liquor license renewal and its request to expand where they can serve alcohol during its regular meeting on Tuesday, April 21.

Councilor Laura Bergus recused herself from the discussion due to a potential conflict of interest.

"It was alleged that I have a conflict of interest in consulting with our council," Bergus said. "I'm not required to recuse myself, but to avoid the appearance of impropriety, I will be sitting this one out."

### How Iowa City zoning impacts Union's alcohol license

Union's premises update request sought to expand where alcohol could

legally be served at the business. Union Bar and Grill's existing Class C liquor license, which expires on April 30, covers only the basement level and second floor. The business applied to add the first floor as an area where alcohol could be sold and consumed.

The Union Bar and Grill is initially classified as an eating establishment in the central business district and can

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Johnson County Attorney Rachel Zimmermann Smith speaks April 22 at the Iowa City City Hall during a press conference providing updates about a shooting that occurred the previous Sunday on the Pedestrian Mall downtown.

JULIA HANSEN/IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN

## Reynolds' pick for HHS head blocked

### Dems: Johnson provides 'diminished' services

**Stephen Gruber-Miller**  
Des Moines Register  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Iowa Senate Democrats blocked the confirmation of two of Gov. Kim Reynolds' nominees, including Department of Health and Human Services Director Larry Johnson.

Gubernatorial nominees require two-thirds support in the Iowa Senate, or 34 votes, to be confirmed.

Johnson received the support of 28 senators with 17 voting against his confirmation Tuesday, April 21, six votes short of the 34 needed.

Reynolds named Johnson to lead the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services in September 2025, succeeding the department's previous director, Kelly Garcia.

Johnson took over the department in October.

Johnson previously served as director of the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals and Licensing. Before that, he was the state public defender. He received Senate confirmation for both those roles.

As director of DIAL, Johnson oversaw the centralization of 16 professional licensing boards previously housed in other agencies following Reynolds' reorganization of Iowa's executive branch.

In a statement, Reynolds said Johnson "defines public service," adding that she appointed him to lead HHS "because he is a proven leader with a record of results."

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## Teen allegedly responsible for Iowa City shooting

**Jessica Rish and Brandon Hurley**  
Iowa City Press-Citizen | USA TODAY NETWORK

A teenager from Cedar Rapids is allegedly responsible for a mass shooting in Iowa City.

Iowa City Police Department police chief Dustin Liston said Damarian M. Jones, 17, allegedly fired a gun six times into a crowd of people at the Pedestrian Mall, injuring five people over the weekend.

Jones has been charged with five counts of attempted murder and will be tried as an adult, according to the Johnson County Attorney's Office. He has not been arrested, the Iowa City Police Department said during a media briefing on Wednesday, April 22.

The shooting was a result of an early morning fight on Sunday, April 19, in Iowa City's Pedestrian Mall, which Liston said included roughly 40 people.

Three of the wounded are University of Iowa stu-

dents. One of the wounded remains in critical condition after getting shot in the head, and another is stable in the hospital. The three others have been released from the hospital, according to the Iowa City PD.

Liston said Jones allegedly was involved in the fight, obtained a firearm, and fired it into a crowd.

The wounded were not targeted, Liston said. One person was shot in the arm and chest, two were hit in the legs, and another was hit in the stomach.

No arrests have been made, though the ICPD said they have served "nearly three dozen search warrants," obtaining three firearms in the process. The investigation has uncovered firearm accessories and multiple rounds of ammunition, while the department has received more than three dozen tips.

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