



Winston-Salem
**Proposed
Amendments to
Noise Ordinance –
Phase 2**

General Government Committee

May 11, 2026



Goals of Noise Ordinance Amendments

- Standardize hours and sound levels
- Make definitions easier to understand
- Clarify rules for when/how a citation may be issued
- Update prohibitions and exceptions

Comparison Cities

- Asheville
- Charlotte
- Concord
- Durham
- Greensboro
- High Point
- Raleigh
- Wilmington

Phase One

- Focuses on public assembly facilities such as amphitheaters, stadiums, arenas, and other outdoor sports or entertainment venues
 - Seating capacity: stadium (5,000+), arena (1,000+), and other outdoor sports or entertainment venues like an amphitheater (1,000+)
 - Establishes a maximum decibel threshold of 85 dB(A) for *amplified* sound
 - Threshold in effect Sunday through Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m.
 - Compliance to be measured from the boundary line of the complainant property owner
 - Class 3 misdemeanor and fines for non-compliance
 - Accountability for non-compliance
- Motorsports events exempted from decibel threshold requirement
- Expands list of exempted activities
- Adds language from County ordinance directly into City Code
- Adopted by the City Council and became effective on March 23, 2026

Phase Two

- Addresses amplified sound emitted in commercial areas, which would include the Central Business District, by establishing noise standards at different times of the day for different days of the week.
- Adds two sections to the ordinance:
 - New Section 46-7: Replaces the previous Section 46-7, which established standards for commercial establishments within an entertainment district. This new section would establish decibel standards for certain times of the day and days of the week for commercial establishments citywide, as follows:
 - Sunday through Thursday
 - (a) 85 db(A) between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.;
 - (b) 60 db(A) between 9:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. the following day;
 - Friday and Saturday
 - (a) 85 db(A) between 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m.;
 - (b) 60 db(A) between 11:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. the following day

Phase Two Continued

- City law enforcement would measure the sound or noise at the property line of the complainant. Establishments found to be non-compliant and “non-cooperative” shall be subject to penalties including an eighteen-month probation from producing amplified or live music outdoors.
- Section 46-9: This section provides for enforcement and penalties for violating the City Code, with penalties ranging from a \$100 civil penalty for a first violation to an eighteen-month probation from producing amplified or live music.
- Also authorizes City law enforcement to address “chronic noise producers” through a collaborative process involving the commercial establishment that is the source of the noise and the City Manager or designee.

Phase Two Continued

- Several factors to consider:
 - ☐ number and frequency of valid noise complaints
 - ☐ proximity and physical relationship between the commercial establishment and complaining locations
 - ☐ severity of sound events, both observed or measured
 - ☐ times and days of the week of sound events
 - ☐ offender's history of cooperation and efforts to alleviate the surrounding problem
 - ☐ history and context of the location.
- Requires the development of a noise mitigation plan.

Other Issues

- “Cruisers” driving with loud engines or mufflers or blaring loud, amplified music, as well as crowd noise from commercial establishments
- Sections 46-2 and 46-36
- Article X of Chapter 74 of the City Code (Sidewalk Cafés)
- The Police Department’s command staff will work with City management on the development of strategies to enforce these ordinances more effectively.

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