



Legislation Text

File #: 20-232, **Version:** 1

TITLE:

Increased Outdoor Dining Space and Other Actions to Support Businesses Opening Under Social Distancing Requirements

PURPOSE: The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Town Council with information on actions that could be taken to support phased opening as COVID-19-related restrictions on businesses operations are eased.

DEPARTMENT: Town Manager, Planning, Public Works, Economic Development, Recreation and Parks, Police

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INFORMATION: The exploration of measures that the Town could support the opening of businesses has been occurring during the COVID-19 closures. A Town survey (*Attachment A*) distributed the week of May 12 provides information on business needs and actions they see as assisting. Governor Roy Cooper's Order #141 and a list of Frequently Asked Questions (*Attachments B & C*) pertaining to the second phase of opening service describe requirements that will be in place through June 26, 2020. A bill passed by the North Carolina General Assembly on May 28th indicates the extent to which this topic is front and center throughout the State, as it is in Carrboro (*Attachment D*). There is some indication that Governor Cooper may veto this bill. The current conditions are that front-door, in-house, and curbside pickup options have been in use by a number of retail businesses and restaurants. Under the Phase 2 order, restaurants that wish to provide in-house are subject to limitations on the numbers of customers and table spacing, use of PPE and sanitizing requirements. Mask use by customers is recommended, not required; a source of concern for some owners.

Uncertainty about customer willingness to dine-in, combined with the lowered capacity and additional requirements, as well as the possibility that stricter provisions or additional closings may be necessary should COVID-19 surges occur, suggest that some restaurants may continue to provide take-out service for a while to come. Staff has outlined three phases of actions to support business openings, with an emphasis on steps the Town can take to relieve or modify regulations and/or existing permits to support onsite or nearby parking for pickup or conversion to dining or pop-up retail. Following an à la carte model of sorts that has already been successfully implemented elsewhere, staff has been working on an À La Carrboro concept under which patrons could order from multiple restaurants and vendors and arrange for a one stop pick up point. A citizen may choose to order a meal from one restaurant, dessert from another, and possibly fresh fruit and vegetables or other retail goods from yet another, all to be picked up at one time in one location, facilitated by town sponsored pick up lanes and / or shared use of public parking lots. Recognizing the interest in outdoor dining experiences, staff are also assessing where and how the Town might provide space that could be used by

customers frequenting businesses in Town.

- Create food hubs and pick-up spaces around town
- Offer outdoor dining areas for restaurants to use
- Provide community style spaces where multiple restaurants can share outdoor space
- Encourage multi-point shopping experiences that enhance economic impact

Phase I - Pick-up food hubs

Designate areas for multiple restaurants, and possibly retail businesses as well, to use as pick-up locations where customers can purchase from multiple vendors with a one-stop shop model similar to Carrboro United.

Land Use/Permissibility: If located in a town right of way, coordination with Public Works Department is needed. If located in a NCDOT right of way, coordination with NCDOT is needed. On private property, this may be possible under an Emergency Declaration by / from the Mayor. The town's role related to private property situations under the declaration is still being considered at this time. These actions are expected to occur in proximity to existing businesses and likely within commercial zoning districts.

Other considerations: Set-up/pick-up/management of pick-up lanes materials and equipment (e.g. signage, barriers, et cetera): Town staff certified in TCM place barriers and check daily. Plan for installation is shared with all so they can check periodically and alert Town of issues if materials or equipment goes missing. Financial impact to the town to be determined according to the extent of purchasing needed, as in signage, barriers, etc.

Possible Locations:

E. Weaver Street (remove 3-4 parking spaces and designate for pick-up spaces)

E. Main Street (establish pick up space in front of Jade Palace - tight, due to bus stop and crosswalk)

Century Center lot on N. Greensboro Street (designate 5 spaces for pick-up). Possibly 1-2 spaces in lot adjacent to Century Center (and adjoining Jade Palace). Some concerns about conflict with shift changes and regular staff trips to/from the Century Center. Recreation & Parks trips increase in summer months, and especially at this time with additional trips to parks for COVID-19-related equipment and site checks.

Action Needed: Proclamation regarding deviation from current land use permits and/or parking requirements. Possible quick turn around of simple site plan review by staff under consideration at this time. Creation of signage for pick-up spaces and possibly obtaining barriers as well.

Phase II - Outdoor dining food hubs

Designate outdoor seating areas where multiple restaurants can work together to provide tables and chairs, possible marquees and heating/cooling equipment as needed based on weather conditions, to accommodate more outdoor dining space. These spaces will be designed for carry-out as opposed to table service to accommodate restaurants easily sharing and increase the capacity for customers using the space. Within the

primary fire district, fire retardant materials will be required.

Land Use/Permissibility: If located on town owned property, coordination with Public Works and other applicable staff as needed. If located on private property, this may be possible under an Emergency Declaration by / from the Mayor. The town's role related to private property situations under the declaration is still being considered at this time.

Other considerations: Set-up/pick-up/management of infrastructure including but not limited to tables, chairs, signage, barriers, et cetera. Management, maintenance, and sanitizing needs to be specified, particularly for regular checks of the safety of equipment and actions to secure if damage or severe weather is anticipated.

Possible BYOS - bring your own sanitizer program? If Town-owned locations, release of liability/indemnification and insurance would be needed. Amenities the town will not provide in these areas

- Tables and chairs
- Tents
- Public Restrooms

Locations:

Century Center Parking Lot at corner of E. Weaver Street and N. Greensboro Street to be closed to create a pedestrian only space with tables and chairs spread out in a manner that maintains appropriate social distancing.

Shared parking lot behind 100 Block of E. Main Street

Other possible locations to be identified if private parties are interested in partnership and funding.

Action Needed: Proclamation regarding deviation from current land use permits and/or parking requirements. And coordination with private parties regarding partnership and funding to bring the concept to fruition.

Phase III - Combined pick-up and outdoor dining hubs

Designate outdoor areas where both pick-up and sit down dining can occur. Optimize these areas by having certain hours of the day for pick-up and other hours for outdoor dining. Consider making accommodations to allow outdoor dining with table service.

Land Use/Permissibility: Similar to above noted considerations. Further thoughts to be shared after reviewing the success and / or possible unintended consequences of Phase I and / or Phase II.

Other considerations: Similar to above noted considerations. Further thoughts to be shared after reviewing the success and / or possible unintended consequences of Phase I and / or Phase II.

Locations: Potentially the same as those used for Phase I and / or Phase II, with possible expanded footprint if appropriate. Other / additional locations to be determined at a later date after reviewing the

success and / or possible unintended consequences of Phase I and / or Phase II.

Action Needed: None at this time. Possible expanded version of Proclamation regarding deviation from current land use permits and/or parking requirements at a later date. Possible quick turn around of simple site plan review by staff under consideration at this time.]

FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT: To be determined.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Town Council consider the information.