



# CITY OF CONCORD

## REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Matthew R. Walsh, Interim Deputy City Manager - Development

DATE: January 24, 2023

SUBJECT: Concrete Barriers for Outdoor Dining in Parking Spaces

### **Recommendation:**

Accept this report and set the attached resolution appropriating the sum of \$34,000 from the Economic Development Reserve to purchase concrete barriers for outdoor dining areas located within parking spaces for public hearing on March 13, 2023.

### **Background:**

In spring 2020, the City instituted a policy whereby restaurants located in the Downtown Central Business District could secure permits to encumber and utilize on-street parking spaces for outdoor dining activities during spring / summer / fall months. This policy was enacted to support restaurants during the Covid-19 Pandemic due to emergency orders which precluded, or severely limited, indoor dining related thereto. Emergency orders associated with the Covid-19 Pandemic expired in June 2021.

Though the Covid-19 Pandemic has waned, the City has continued to permit outdoor dining in parking spaces. Anecdotally, the program is popular with diners, and contributes to Downtown vitality.

During the 2022 outdoor dining season, four restaurants encumbered 13 on-street parking spaces, combined, for dining activities (Parklets). The restaurants are: The Barley House, Siam Orchid, Revival and The Draft.

Presently, the outdoor dining season runs from April 15 – November 15 annually.

In July 2021, the City acquired 35 water filled plastic barricades to partially enclose dining areas. These barriers have been furnished to restaurants free of charge.

During the pre-dawn hours of July 5, 2022, a motor vehicle accident occurred, which involved the Barley House's Parklet. Due to the time of accident, no injuries occurred. However, the amount of property damage stemming from the incident was significant.

In the wake of the Barley House incident, City Administration and the Ad-Hoc Outdoor Committee initiated a review of barricades used to facilitate outdoor dining activities within on-street parking spaces. This process included a review approaches used in other municipalities with similar programs.

**Discussion:**

During its January 10, 2023, the Ad-Hoc Outdoor Dining Committee received a presentation from City Administration which discussed traffic volumes on Main Street, the Barley House incident, use of water filled barriers for dining areas, as well as a review of practices and approaches employed by other communities such as Manchester, Nashua, Portsmouth, Hanover, and Boston relative to barriers for Parklets. A copy of the presentation is attached.

Based upon said information, the Ad-Hoc Outdoor Dining Committee recommends that the City appropriate funds to acquire concrete “jersey” barriers to fully enclose those portions of outdoor dining areas located within on-street parking spaces abutting travelled ways and other parking spaces. All barriers would be interlocked to form a continuous enclosure around each parking area.

Total amount of funds requested is \$34,000. Of this total:

- \$18,000 is to purchase the barriers. Approximately 30 pieces of 10’ barrier will be required. This quantity will be sufficient to support the four restaurants which have historically participated in the program.
- \$6,000 is to install and remove the barriers for the upcoming 2023 dining season. This effort will require renting equipment to handle barriers during the installation and removal process. Funds to rent equipment in subsequent years will be addressed during the City’s annual budget process.
- \$10,000 is for potential beautification of the barriers. Because the barriers will be owned by the City, the City will have the ability to decorate the barricades. Aesthetic enhancements could include paint, or planter boxes similar to those that have been successfully used in Portsmouth, as shown in the attached presentation. The Ad-Hoc Dining Committee expressed potential interest in beautification of barricades, but opted to defer to City Administration to select and implement strategies related thereto. The Committee also stressed that any aesthetic improvements should be have a coordinated, uniform theme and be of professional, workman like quality. These funds are a placeholder to finance any potential beautification efforts.

If approved, it is the intent of City Administration to acquire and install the barriers in time for the start of the 2023 dining season on April 15<sup>th</sup>. All restaurants with Parklets will be required to accept installation of concrete barriers. Unless otherwise directed by City Council, the barriers will be provided free of charge to participating restaurants on a first come, first served basis. Once the City’s supply of concrete barriers is exhausted, the City will deny applications for dining in on-street parking spaces.