



CITY OF CONCORD
New Hampshire's Main Street™
Community Development Department

REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Carlos P. Baía, Deputy City Manager for Development
DATE: January 21, 2021
SUBJECT: Proposed Renewal of Expanded Downtown Outdoor Dining

Recommendation

Accept this report recommending that City staff be authorized to issue permits for expanded outdoor dining in 2021 in continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

In 2020, the Concord City Council authorized the issuance of special permits for expanded outdoor dining that allowed restaurants in the downtown to use areas of the public sidewalk, squares, and parking spaces in front of their businesses to accommodate customers' tables and chairs. The City imposed certain limitations on this practice including provisions that restaurants could only use the space directly in front of their businesses (unless there was a hardship and written approval could be secured from a neighboring business/property owner); pedestrian and cyclist access needed to be kept clear and the spacing of the tables and chairs needed to comply with the pertinent public health directives from the State. The restaurants were also responsible for cleaning these areas.

This improvised program was well-received and ran until the conclusion of the outdoor dining season on November 15th.

Discussion

Despite public health modifications relieving the more stringent dining restrictions imposed in the winter and early spring of 2020, many restaurants in our community are undoubtedly still struggling as compared to years past. With the uptick of Coronavirus cases over this current winter and the phased roll-out of the vaccines that could take until the late spring/early summer to vaccinate most residents, this challenge is likely to continue for much of 2021. To address this, Staff is recommending that Council grant authorization for the City to once again issue

expanded outdoor dining permits for 2021. As is typical to meet our winter maintenance demands, said permits would be effective April 1st and run through November 15th.

The City's Parking Committee reviewed this proposal at their January 25th meeting and were supportive of allowing the restaurateurs to use public parking for this purpose. There was some discussion at that same meeting of whether certain standards on appearance of the restaurant's tables and chairs should be imposed as part of this temporary permit process but the committee did not come to consensus on this specific issue.