



Legislation Text

File #: [20-0664], Version: 1

Temporarily Suspend Certain Ordinances and Authorize the Town Manager to Continue Temporary Measures to Aid Retail and Restaurant Use during the COVID-19 Pandemic State of Emergency.

Staff:

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Department:

Manager's Office, Economic Development

Overview: On [June 3, 2020 <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4550796&GUID=BDE1764A-EA17-4D1C-98A7-6FCBD9FB5B5A&Options=ID|Text|&Search=retail>](https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4550796&GUID=BDE1764A-EA17-4D1C-98A7-6FCBD9FB5B5A&Options=ID|Text|&Search=retail), the Council enacted Ordinance (2020-06-03/O-1) allowing temporary measures to assist our business community by expanding walking and dining space on Franklin Street. At the time Ordinance 2020-06-03/-1 was enacted, the Council agreed to reconsider these measures at its first business meeting in September. In response to community and Council interest in supporting the Chapel Hill economy while promoting public health and safety, staff have worked to install sidewalk extensions in Downtown. Additionally, new sidewalk dining application fees have been temporarily waived.

Staff have coordinated with stakeholders including the Downtown Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, and local businesses and believe the retail and restaurant community would benefit from less restrictive regulations during the reopening of Chapel Hill as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response. Additional measures to develop and coordinate opportunities for outdoor operations on private property and on public rights-of-ways are recommended to promote physical distancing.

☆ **Recommendation(s):**

1. That the Council authorize the Town Manager to continue the Franklin Street sidewalk expansion.
2. That the Council authorize the Town Manager to continue to designate town off-street parking lots or other town or private areas for dining and sales purposes.
3. That the Council authorize the Town Manager to continue to temporarily allow outdoor operations for restaurants and retail businesses on public sidewalks and rights-of-way and to continue to waive fees for new sidewalk dining permit applications.

Decision Points:

- Consider authorizing the Town Manager to continue the temporary easing of restrictions on sidewalk dining, sidewalk sales, temporary signage, and use of parking lots for physical distancing.
- Consider continuing to waive fees for new sidewalk dining permit applications while state and county states of emergency remain in place.
- Consider authorizing the Town Manager to continue the Franklin Street sidewalk extension until state and local social distancing regulations end or until revoked by action of the town council.

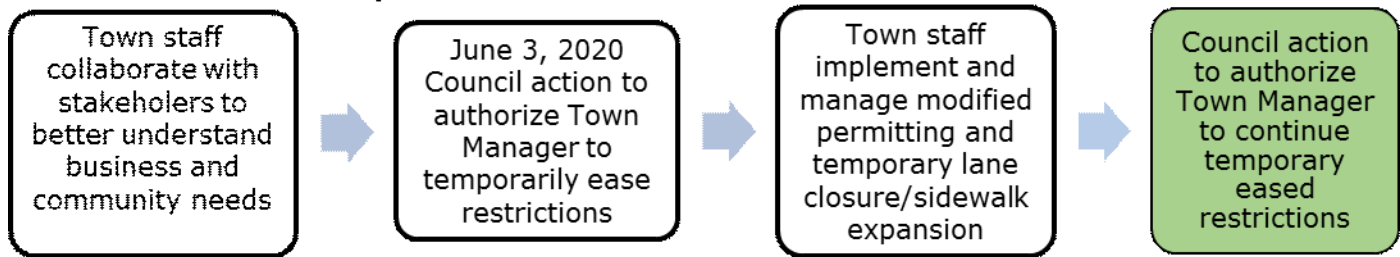
Key Issues:

- Increase economic vitality in Chapel Hill as businesses engage in phased reopening in accordance with State and County orders by temporarily easing Town restrictions on sidewalk dining, sidewalk sales, temporary signage, and use of parking lots for physical distancing.
- Encourage health and safety by increasing physical distancing and creating additional space for

pedestrians and business patrons.

Fiscal Impact/Resources: Materials for traffic pattern changes have already been purchased and are in place. Costs associated with removal would consist of staff time and repainting. Orange County Economic Development contributed to this project through Article 46 funds. Article 46 funds are designated for economic development purposes and allocated based to Orange County municipalities based on population.

Where is this item in its process?



Attachments:

- Ordinance

AN ORDINANCE TO CONTINUE AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO PERMIT TEMPORARY MEASURES TO AID RETAIL AND RESTAURANT USE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC STATE OF EMERGENCY (2020-10-07/O-1)

WHEREAS, on May 20, 2020, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper entered Executive Order 141, authorizing retail activity, including restaurants and retail establishments, to reopen with restricted indoor occupancy during the COVID-19 State of Emergency; and

WHEREAS, on May 21, 2020, Orange County Chair Penny Rich and Chapel Hill Mayor Pam Hemminger adopted local directives adding further restrictions on retail and restaurant indoor capacity; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Chapel Hill currently has ordinances and regulations in place allowing limited use of public sidewalk areas for retail restaurant seating and other commercial activities; and

WHEREAS, the Town has other ordinances and has issued development permits which establish minimum number of parking spaces and which would preclude the use of such spaces, on a temporary basis, for other purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council finds that the restrictions on indoor retail and restaurant activity are reasonable for the public welfare and that temporarily allowing greater retail and restaurant activity outdoors on public and private open areas would be in the public interest and can, subject to regulation, be conducted in a manner that is consistent with public safety; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that the retail and restaurant communities would benefit with relief during the reopening of Chapel Hill as part of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the Council and Town staff has been coordinating with stakeholders, including the Downtown Partnership and local business owners, to develop and coordinate opportunities for outdoor operations on private property and on public rights-of-ways; and

WHEREAS, the Council has been working to aid and assist the retail and restaurant to permit additional signage for businesses located within any nonresidential zoning district; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that temporarily suspending certain Town ordinances to permit greater use of public sidewalks, outdoor public parking areas and other outdoor public and private areas for restaurant seating and commercial activity is in the public interest and would benefit the public welfare by enhancing economic activity.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the Town of Chapel Hill as follows:

Section 1. Notwithstanding any provisions of: Chapter 3 (Alcoholic Beverages); Chapter 11, Article IX (Temporary Outdoor Activities in or Near Parking Lots or Public Streets); and Chapter 17, Article VI (Sale of Merchandise on Sidewalks, Public Streets); or any other provision of the Town's Code of Ordinances or Town-issued development permits to the contrary, the Town Manager is authorized to issue permits for the use of public sidewalk, public open spaces, public parking areas and private open spaces and parking areas for outdoor retail sales and restaurant service and seating and to allow temporary signage for businesses to advertise they are open for business provided:

1. all necessary permits from county and state health and alcohol regulatory agencies are in hand;
2. the specific locations have been approved by the Chapel Hill Fire Department for access and exits;
and

3. any temporary signage meets otherwise applicable size standards for similar signage and does not block site-distance or otherwise interfere with pedestrian and vehicular safety; and
4. provisions are provided for pedestrian and vehicular separation and travel in the vicinity of areas closed to permit said retail and restaurant activities and are reviewed and approved by the Chapel Hill Public Safety and Traffic Engineering staff in accordance with plans for any lane closures approved by the Town and, if required, the North Carolina Department of Transportation. This authorization shall include East and West Franklin Streets between 205 East Franklin Street and Merritt Mill Road. In addition, the Manager is authorized to identify and permit closure of portions of other public sidewalks along areas fronted by private dining and other retail operations provided the provisions of this ordinance are met.

Private open spaces and parking areas may be identified by the private property owners for the uses authorized by this ordinance subject to the standards set out in this Section and Section 3 below. Said private use shall be subject to issue of a special event permit by the Town.

Section 2. During the term of any State of Emergency (State or Locally-imposed) the Town Manager is further authorized to designate town off street parking lots or other town or private areas for same dining and sales purposes.

Section 3. Any authorized activity engaged in pursuant to this ordinance shall be subject to regulations which include, in addition to others which may be imposed at the reasonable discretion of the Town Manager, the following:

- A. For outdoor operations for restaurants and retail businesses on private property:
 - Each business must follow social distancing recommendations for spacing of tables, chairs and other furniture.
 - Business operators are responsible for cleaning and sanitizing the outdoor areas.
 - The Town shall not be responsible for any private property stored outdoors on public property and/or right of way during or after business operating hours.
 - The Town reserves the right to order the business operator to remove outdoor dining or retail sales if there is a material interference with public interest or violation of terms of this ordinance.
 - Parking requirements otherwise applicable under the Town's Land Use Management Ordinance and any permit issued thereunder may be reduced temporarily to accommodate outdoor operations.
- B. For restaurants and retail businesses on public sidewalks and rights-of-way:
 - Each business must follow social distancing recommendations for spacing of tables, chairs and other furniture.
 - Outdoor dining and sidewalk sales may only operate outdoors during hours that are consistent with the business operating hours.
 - Business operators are responsible for cleaning and sanitizing the outdoor areas.
 - Items stored overnight are at the business owner's risk.
 - The Town reserves the right to order the business operator to remove outdoor dining or retail sales
 - All outdoor dining and retail uses must apply for a sidewalk dining permit and comply with the terms and conditions. (Fees will be waived for Sidewalk Dining Permits while this ordinance is in effect.)
- C. Outdoor uses can only be in areas where a minimum of six feet of distancing between pedestrians and customers can be provided.
 - No tables, chairs, umbrellas, merchandise racks, or other objects shall encroach into any area which is designated for use as pedestrian walkway
 - Furniture, fixture, or equipment shall not be permanently affixed to the public sidewalk.
 - Access to fire hydrants, fire hose building connections for sprinkler systems, and building entrances and exits shall not be obstructed.
 - The Town Manager may order the business operator to remove outdoor dining or sidewalk sales if

there is a material interference with public interest or violation of terms of this ordinance or any future Town regulations established regarding wearing face coverings or other relevant Town regulations during the current State of Emergency.

The Town Manager is authorized to allow minor adjustments to the regulations imposed by this Ordinance upon a determination that public safety and public health are not adversely impacted.

Section 4. This Ordinance shall remain in effect upon enactment. The Town Manager may, upon a determination that public safety and public health require, suspend the ordinance in any area where it is in effect.

These regulations will remain in effect until state and local social distancing regulations end or until revoked by action of the town council.

This the 7th day of October, 2020.

The Agenda will reflect the text below and/or the motion text will be used during the meeting.

By enacting the ordinance, the Council reaffirms (2020-06-03/O-1) and authorizes the Town Manager to continue temporary measures to aid retail and restaurant use during the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency.