



DOCKET ITEM #8
Zoning Text Amendment #2021-00008
***Extension of Temporary Program for Business Relief and
to Address Public Need Related to COVID-19***

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| Issue: Extension of Temporary Program for Business Relief and to Address Public Need Related to COVID-19 | Planning Commission Hearing: | September 9, 2021 |
| | City Council Hearing: | September 18, 2021 |
| Description: Extension of Temporary Program for Business Relief and to Address Public Need Related to COVID-19 to April 1, 2022 (A) Initiation of a Text Amendment; and (B) Public Hearing and consideration of a Text Amendment to extend the expiration of an existing temporary program for business relief from January 1, 2022 to April 1, 2022 | | |
| Staff: Karl Moritz, Director, Department of Planning & Zoning Christina Zechman Brown, Deputy City Attorney Ann Horowitz, Principal Planner, Department of Planning & Zoning | | |
| Staff recommendation: Staff recommends that the Planning Commission INITIATE and recommends APPROVAL of the text amendment. | | |

Extension of Temporary Program for Business Relief
and to Address Public Need Related to COVID-19

In October 2020, The Planning Commission initiated and recommended approval of Zoning Text Amendment #2020-0008 – *Temporary Program for Business Relief and to Address Public Need Related to COVID-19*. The City Council approved the text amendment and it is currently in effect with an expiration date of January 1, 2022.

The text amendment codified emergency initiatives put into place to support small businesses during the pandemic. The initiatives include:

- Allowing all restaurants to provide delivery service and pick-up service. Delivery vehicles and customer pick-ups may use on-street parking subject to posted parking requirements.
- Hours-of-operation regulations have been suspended for restaurants, convenience stores, catering operations and automobile service stations (gasoline stations).
- Allowing restaurants and retail establishments to vend on adjacent sidewalks or parking lots.
- Suspension of local restrictions on alcohol sales, including off-premises alcohol sales and delivery restrictions.
- In addition to the current program, which allows participants in the King Street Outdoor Dining program to have outdoor dining on sidewalks under certain guidelines, participants will also be permitted to set up outdoor dining in parking spaces outside of their businesses.
- In all other areas of the City, outdoor dining is permitted on restaurant property and in the public right-of-way (sidewalks, parking spaces, parking lots) where it will not detrimentally impact adjacent uses.
- Restaurant operators may use off-street spaces located on the same property for outdoor dining where it will not detrimentally impact adjacent uses.
- Retail businesses may request the use of sidewalks, on-street parking spaces, and privately-owned parking lots and spaces to display their products and conduct sales, where it will not detrimentally impact adjacent uses.
- Health and fitness business operators may use sidewalks, privately-owned parking lots and spaces and on-street parking spaces to offer classes and provide access to fitness equipment, where it will not detrimentally impact adjacent uses.

The approved ordinance number 5313 is attached and provides the exact language of each provision.

City staff has been reviewing the business recovery program, with the assistance of affected businesses and members of the public, with the intent to bring forward in October the recommended elements of a permanent program. Many elements have proven popular with the public, have provided welcome vitality and enjoyment, and have benefited our small businesses. All stakeholders, including staff, have identified opportunities for improvement, and staff looks forward to the October hearings to review those with the Planning Commission and City Council. Staff posted an online poll for feedback regarding continuation of the program and the response was overwhelmingly positive.

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In outreach discussions with restaurants in mid-August, restaurateurs noted that they must begin investments for winter 2021-22 now. Although October is only a month away, it would greatly assist them to know in September that the program will continue through the winter.

So even though staff will be bringing back a more complete recommendation in October for the consideration of the business community, the public, the Planning Commission and City Council, staff agreed to bring forward this limited extension now so that small business owners can be assured that any investments they make in preparing for the winter will be able to be recouped.

Staff is proposing one change to the existing ordinance, which is to amend Section 1 to change the expiration date from January 1, 2022 to April 1, 2022, specifically:

Section 1. The regulations herein are temporary and are being put in place to address the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID 19 pandemic on local businesses. The ordinance will expire on ~~January~~ April 1, 2022, except for Sections 6(g) and 7 as indicated therein.

Attachments:

Attachment #1: Approved Ordinance #5313 with markup showing proposed amendment of Section 1.

ATTACHMENT 1

ORDINANCE NO. 5313

AN ORDINANCE to amend and reordain the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, and the City of Alexandria Zoning Ordinance, as amended, in accordance with the text amendment heretofore approved by city council as Text Amendment No. 2020-00008.

WHEREAS, the City Council finds and determines that:

1. Due to COVID-19, on March 14, 2020, the City Manager issued a Declaration of Local Emergency applicable throughout the City of Alexandria (“City”), which was consented to by the City Council; and
2. As of the date of the adoption of this ordinance the Declaration of Local Emergency is still in effect and the community continues to face enormous impacts from COVID-19; and
3. Once the Declaration of Local Emergency is lifted the impacts of COVID-19 will persist for some time; and
4. Since the Declaration of Local Emergency the City Council ratified actions taken to assist local businesses and extended the expiration of those deadlines until March 31, 2021, in an acknowledgment of the ongoing impacts from COVID-19; and
5. The City Council finds and determines that the public interest would be served by the establishment of a program that would allow for more adaptable operation of businesses and address public need during the emergency and recovery, the program will enable businesses to operate and customers to support businesses in a safe and efficient manner, promote pedestrian and business friendly vitality, ensure that the public’s use of the public right-of-way will not be significantly impaired, ensure that other uses will be protected from the adverse impacts of the uses, and address public needs that arise related to COVID-19; and
6. In Text Amendment No. 2020-00008, the Planning Commission, having found that the public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice so require, recommended approval to the City Council on November 5, 2020 of a text amendment to the City Code and Zoning Ordinance to address the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID 19 pandemic on local business, which recommendation was approved by the City Council at public hearing on November 14, 2020;
7. The City Council in adopting this ordinance expressly adopts, ratifies, affirms and concurs in the finding and action of the Planning Commission above stated;
8. All requirements of law precedent to the adoption of this ordinance have been complied with; now, therefore,

THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA HEREBY ORDAINS:

Section 1. The regulations herein are temporary and are being put in place to address the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID 19 pandemic on local businesses. The ordinance will expire on ~~January~~ April 1, 2022, except for Sections 6(g) and 7 as indicated therein.

Section 2. *Restaurant Deliveries and Pick-up.* Notwithstanding the requirements of Section 11-500 of the Zoning Ordinance, restaurants may provide delivery service and pick-up service without amending current special use permits or obtaining new special use permits. Delivery vehicles and customer pick-ups may use on-street parking subject to posted parking requirements.

Section 3. *Hours of Operation.* Notwithstanding the requirements of Section 11-500 of the Zoning Ordinance, the hours-of-operation for restaurants, convenience and grocery stores, catering operations and automobile service stations (gasoline stations) may be modified without amending current special use permits or obtaining new special use permits.

Section 4. *Sidewalk/Parking Lot Vending.*

(a) Notwithstanding the requirements of Section 7-1500 of the Zoning Ordinance, restaurants and retail establishments are permitted to vend on adjacent sidewalks or parking lots. Vending is limited to the placement of orders and customer pick-up. To the extent required, establishments must put in place limitations in compliance with the most current health and safety standards.

(b) A temporary exception to Section 5-2-29 of the City Code is hereby authorized to allow restaurants and retail establishments to vend on adjacent sidewalks pursuant to Section 4(a) above.

Section 5. *Off Premises Alcohol Sales.* Notwithstanding the requirements of Section 11-500 of the Zoning Ordinance, local restrictions on alcohol sales are suspended, including off-premises alcohol sales and delivery restrictions without having the amend a current special use permit or obtain a new special use permit. Businesses remain subject to all VABC licensure requirements.

Section 6. *Alexandria Outdoor Business Expansion Program.*

(a) Within the King Street Outdoor Dining (KSOD) area
Restaurants within the KSOD may continue to utilize the KSOD program in Section 6-800 of the Zoning Ordinance and comply with the applicable guidelines therein.

In addition to the program in Section 6-800 of the Zoning Ordinance, restaurants may set up outdoor dining in parking spaces outside of their businesses if:

- All current health and safety standards are complied with;

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- A current certificate of insurance is submitted to the Department of Planning and Zoning (P&Z);
- For a restaurant without a current permit for the KSOD program, an application must be submitted to and approved by P&Z;
- Participants comply with modified guidelines of the Parklet Program, including the location of parking spaces for outdoor dining away from corners or not on streets with a high traffic volume; and
- The year-round outdoor storage of dining furniture will also be permitted whether the restaurant is open or closed.

There are no fees for this approval.

(b) All areas outside the KSOD boundaries

Notwithstanding the requirements of Section 11-513 of the Zoning Ordinance, outdoor dining is permitted on restaurant property and in the public right-of-way (sidewalks, parking spaces, parking lots) where it will not detrimentally impact adjacent uses. Use will be allowed upon review and approval by staff from the P&Z, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES), Health, Fire and Police departments of an application.

An application must be submitted to P&Z including:

- The proposed locations and square footage for outdoor dining
- number of seats;
- If the public right of way will be used, a current certificate of insurance must be submitted to P&Z to be eligible;
- If on private land not controlled by the operator, the operator must indicate permission of the property owner; and
- An explanation of compliance with specific criteria outlined below;

Approval Criteria:

- Restaurants may use parking spaces in front of their business, adhering to the modified guidelines of the Parklet Program, including the location of parking spaces for outdoor dining away from corners or not on streets with a high traffic volume.
- Restaurant seating must be arranged in accordance with current health and safety standards.
- Restaurant operators must request that T&ES install traffic safety measures such as wheel stops and flex posts for outdoor dining areas in parking spaces in the public right-of-way.
- Outdoor dining on sidewalks must allow for at least five feet of continuous pedestrian access.
- Outdoor dining hours must be the same as approved in the restaurant's special use permit.
- Live entertainment is not permitted.
- Liability insurance certificate required for use of public right-of-way.

There are no fees for this approval.

(c) A temporary exception to Section 5-2-29 of the City Code is hereby authorized to allow restaurants and retail establishments to have outdoor dining on adjacent sidewalks and public parking spaces pursuant to Section 6(b) above.

(d) Outdoor dining in off-street parking spaces on private property
Notwithstanding the requirements of Section 8-200(A)(17) and 11-513 of the Zoning Ordinance, restaurant operators may use off-street spaces located on the same property for outdoor dining where it will not detrimentally impact adjacent uses. Use will be allowed upon review and approval by staff from the P&Z, T&ES, Health, Fire and Police departments of the letter agreement.

A letter agreement must be submitted to P&Z with the following information:

- Proposed locations for outdoor dining,
- Number of seats,
- Number of parking spaces used, and
- Compliance with specific criteria outlined below.

Approval Criteria:

- Restaurant seating must be arranged in accordance with current health and safety standards.
- Outdoor dining hours must be the same as approved in the restaurant's special use permit.
- Live entertainment is not permitted.

There are no fees for this approval.

(e) Retail Uses

Notwithstanding the requirements of Sections 5-2-29, 5-8-3(f), and 10-2-24 of the City Code and Sections 7-1500 and 8-200(A)(16) of the Zoning Ordinance, retail businesses may request the use of sidewalks, on-street parking spaces, and privately-owned parking lots and spaces to display their products and conduct sales, where it will not detrimentally impact adjacent uses. Use will be allowed upon review and approval by staff from the P&Z, T&ES, Health, Fire and Police departments of the required information.

The following must be submitted to P&Z:

- Proposed locations and square footage for outdoor space;
- A current certificate of insurance; and
- A letter of agreement with conditions ensuring compliance with the specific criteria outlined below.

Approval Criteria:

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- Retail operators may use parking spaces in front of their business, adhering to the modified guidelines of the Parklet Program, including the location of parking spaces for outdoor retail away from corners or not on streets with a high traffic volume.
- Retail operators must request that T&ES install traffic safety measures such as wheel stops and flex posts for outdoor retail areas in parking spaces in the public right-of-way.
- Social distancing requirements must be met.
- Outdoor display on sidewalks must allow for at least five feet of continuous pedestrian access.
- Live entertainment is not permitted.
- Liability insurance certificate is required for use of public right-of-way.
- If on private land not controlled by the operator, the operator must indicate permission of the property owner.

There are no fees for this approval.

(f) Health and fitness uses on sidewalks, in off-street parking spaces on private property and in on-street parking spaces

Notwithstanding the requirements of Sections 8-200(A)(16), 8-200(A)(18), and 11-513 of the Zoning Ordinance, health and fitness business operators may request the use of sidewalks, privately-owned parking lots and spaces and on-street parking spaces to offer classes and provide access to fitness equipment, where it will not detrimentally impact adjacent uses. Use will be allowed upon review and approval by staff from the P&Z, T&ES, Health, Fire and Police departments of the required information.

The following must be submitted to P&Z:

- Proposed locations and square footage for outdoor space;
- A current certificate of insurance; and
- A letter of agreement with conditions ensuring compliance with the specific criteria outlined below.

Approval Criteria:

- Health and fitness use operators may use sidewalks and parking spaces in front of their business, adhering to the modified guidelines of the Parklet Program, including the location of parking spaces for fitness uses away from corners or not on streets with a high traffic volume.
- Business operators must request that T&ES install traffic safety measures such as wheel stops and flex posts for outdoor fitness areas in parking spaces in the public right-of-way.
- Current health and safety standards must be met.
- Outdoor activities on sidewalks must allow for at least five feet of continuous pedestrian access.
- Live entertainment is not permitted.
- Liability insurance certificate is required for use of public right-of-way.

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- If private land is not controlled by the operator, the operator must indicate permission of the property owner.

There are no fees for this approval.

(g) Retractable Awnings in the Old and Historic Alexandria District and in the Parker Gray-Historic District

Notwithstanding Section 10-103(A) and 10-203(A), retractable awnings may be administratively approved and are subject to the criteria listed in the Old and Historic Alexandria District and Parker-Gray Historic District Design Guidelines awning chapter. Permits issued pursuant to this section will expire on or before November 1, 2023, unless an extension is approved by the Board of Architectural Review.

(h) Building Permit Fees

Notwithstanding Resolution Number 2769, building permit fees are not being charged for proposals associated with the outdoor business operations of restaurants, retail stores and fitness uses. Businesses are eligible with P&Z approval for temporary outdoor business expansions or the KSOD program or City Council approval of a special use permit for outdoor dining.

(i) Fire Prevention Permit Fees

Notwithstanding Ordinance Number 5150, fire prevention permit fees are not being charged for proposals associated with the outdoor business operations of restaurants, retail stores and fitness uses. Businesses are eligible with P&Z approval for temporary outdoor business expansions or the KSOD program or City Council approval of a special use permit for outdoor dining.

Section 7. *Tolling of Validity Periods for Certain Land Use Permits.*

Notwithstanding Sections 10-206, 11-418 and 11-506 of the Zoning Ordinance, the validity period for development site plans, special use permits, development special use permits, certificate of appropriateness, and permits to demolish shall be extended for the number of months as follows:

- For applications approved prior to March 14, 2020: 12 months or the number of months that the City's Declaration of Local Emergency is in place, whichever is longer
- For applications approved March 14, 2020 or after: the number of months beginning on the approval date through the expiration of the City's Declaration of Local Emergency.

Section 8. *Transportation Management Plan (TMP) Survey.* The annual survey required by Section 11-707(B) will not be required until the termination of this temporary ordinance.

Section 9. *Designation of Parking Spaces for curbside pick up.* Notwithstanding Section 5-8-3(f) of the City Code, the City staff will continue to designate public parking spaces as curbside pick-up areas. Spaces will be chosen based on proximity to restaurants and retail uses and will minimize impacts on surrounding properties.

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Section 10. *Closure of 100 block of King Street.* Notwithstanding Section 5-8-3(f), the closure of the 100 block of King Street to vehicular traffic will continue.

Section 11. *City Emergency Use.* Notwithstanding the definition of public building in Section 1-125 of the Zoning Ordinance, any special use permit issued for the use of a city building, park or facility, or any Zoning Ordinance section or current special use permit that limits uses on private property, the City is authorized to use its facilities and those it obtains permission from private property owners to utilize to address public needs in response to the COVID-19 emergency. Such uses will be deemed permitted uses in that zone related to the public use. Locations will be chosen to minimize impacts on surrounding properties.