

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: SUSPENSION OF VENDING LICENSES DUE TO COVID-19

BACKGROUND:

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, on March 18, City staff administratively suspended Vending Licenses. These licenses are used by food vendors who operate in regular locations in downtown and Campustown. The City Council has subsequently approved Vending Licenses for several special events occurring in the downtown during the next several months. For the special events occurring this fall, several requested Vending Licenses for the purpose of displaying merchandise, not food.

Routine vending operations outside of special events have not resumed. These routine Vending Licenses are primarily for food sales.

On May 26, the City Council authorized the temporary relocation of vendors who normally operate on Welch Avenue to Chamberlain Lot Y. This action was requested due to the Campustown Public Improvements Project, which is currently taking place. The relocation is effective once the suspension of vending operations has concluded.

Staff is seeking direction from the City Council as to whether to continue to suspension of Vending Licenses (except those approved as part of organized special events).

The City Clerk's Office has received inquiries from prospective vendors about obtaining new Vending Licenses. It appears that licensed vendors who operated prior to the pandemic on City streets and sidewalks have found alternative locations on private property to vend (which does not require a Vending License) or have paused their vending operations altogether.

As with other decisions related to COVID-19, the Council must consider the ability of these operations to operate in a hygienic manner, along with the ability to appropriately distance patrons. City staff notes that pre-pandemic, crowds tended to form by vendors as patrons wait for food, particularly within the hours around bar closing time.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Continue the suspension of Vending Licenses through December 31, 2020, except those approved as part of a special event. Prior to that date, staff will re-evaluate conditions and present an update to the City Council.
2. Resume suspended Vending Licenses and direct staff to accept applications for new licenses effective immediately.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Ongoing vending operations have been suspended since March. City staff is continuing to receive inquiries from prospective vendors, and therefore, clarity from the City Council regarding vending would be helpful. Staff continues to have concerns about the crowds that form at food vendors and the ability to maintain appropriate patron distancing and hygiene.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1 as described above.