



City of Sonoma

Agenda Item Summary

Meeting: City Council - Sep 09 2020

Department

Administration

Staff Contact

Cathy Capriola, City Manager

Agenda Item Title

Provide an Update Regarding the City's Business Expansion & Recovery Efforts including the Promenade, Parklets and Parking Augmentation Ideas

Summary

The worldwide pandemic and resulting economic impact have dramatically impacted local economies, businesses, and workers. This is especially true for the City of Sonoma with our strong tourism-based economy. The City Council has taken a number of actions to support our business community, workers and economy.

May 18, 2020 Council Meeting

- Authorized reopening and recovery measures to allow businesses to expand their operating space utilizing public sidewalks, the Plaza, Grinstead amphitheater, public rights-of-way (including parking areas and roadways), their own property or neighboring properties with neighbor agreement.
- Create drop off / delivery parking spaces and use of parking spaces for business expansion and to reduce private parking requirements on a temporary basis.
- Create Ad-Hoc City Council Business Recovery and Re-Opening Sub-Committee – Mayor Harvey and Vice Mayor Hundley.

August 3, 2020 Council Meeting

- Extension of the partial street closure of First Street East between East Napa Street and Patten Street to the north side of the parking lot just north of 575 First Street East.
- Permitting canopies to be installed over outside seating areas on public sidewalks and City streets, as allowed by health orders.
- Trial Closure for August and September of First Street East along the Plaza to create more business expansion and outdoor dining opportunities.

August 17, 2020 Council Meeting

- Extend business expansion opportunities on Depot Park and other City Parks for businesses and non-profits and to also allow businesses to use additional outside areas of their own property or neighboring properties (with appropriate documentation of consent from property owners) for business expansion.

The above policy authority has generated the following measures to help support local businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic through a number of programs including Sonoma Al Fresco, the First Street East Promenade, Parklets, Sidewalk Extensions, and ongoing outreach and communication with the business community.

At the meeting, City staff will provide an oral report and PowerPoint presentation to discuss the above programs to date and provide an update on the next steps with parklets and sidewalk extensions. Staff has been working through issues of safety, cost, design, durability,

function and impacts. The Executive Director of the Sonoma Valley Chamber of Commerce, Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau and Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Alliance will also provide updates.

Sonoma Al Fresco: Through the Sonoma Al Fresco Program, City staff has worked to support business expansions into both private and public places to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Sonoma businesses. This program has allowed businesses to remain open and patrons to enjoy Sonoma's al fresco experiences while maintaining safe areas for pedestrians. Businesses have been allowed to provide new or expanded service facilities on sidewalks or public on-street parking spaces (parklets) in front of the business; outdoor patios, nearby alleys, courtyards, alcoves, or neighboring property (with neighbor agreement); and/or In the Sonoma Plaza park seating area. Staff has been processing a variety of permits for local business, including Temporary Use Permits (TUP's), encroachment permits, and licensing agreements to allow businesses to expand their outdoor activities. These efforts include close collaboration with City staff, the Sonoma Chamber of Commerce, Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau, Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Association, and outside agencies such as the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) and Sonoma County Office of Environmental Health and Safety. To date, City staff has approved 21 applications for business expansion from Plaza businesses for a variety of business expansion requests through the Sonoma Al Fresco Program.

First Street East Promenade: To create safe opportunities for businesses to operate, the City has implemented a pilot program which entails a partial closure of First Street East along the Plaza (between East Spain Street and just north of the business located at 450 First Street East) Friday and Saturday evenings between 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM on a trial basis. The initial launch of this program occurred on Friday, August 21 and Saturday, August 22 and has occurred every weekend since, for a total of three weekends. Labor Day weekend it was expanded to include Sunday evening. The City initially received 7 applications from businesses interested in participating, City staff approved five of the applications, yet only two businesses have taken advantage of the program. The cost per weekend is approximately \$2,500 plus additional City staff costs for coordination and public information.

Overall, the Sonoma Promenade program has garnered positive support from the community. The patrons of the Promenade love idea and the opportunity for more Al Fresco dining. A few businesses on First Street West have requested street closures there.

Unfortunately, the Promenade opened at the same time the North Bay fires and smoke arrived. In hindsight, some of the businesses who were approved to expand into the Promenade were already approved and serving from their outdoor dining areas within the Sonoma Plaza and when the time came to utilize the Promenade they made the determination that they didn't require the additional space or didn't have the staffing to support two different seating areas. For the two businesses who participated in the Promenade, they have appreciated the opportunity and look forward to working on a path forward that includes utilizing the parking spaces in front of their existing businesses on a daily basis in the form of a parklet.

First Street East/East Napa Road Closure: To provide outdoor dining space for Pangloss Cellars and Maya Restaurant, the City Council approved a partial street closure of First Street East between East Napa Street and Patten Street. A safe, marked pedestrian walkway extends down the flat, middle of the roadway. Maya Restaurant has set up dining tables along the eastern side of the street and Pangloss Cellars has tasting room tables along the west side of the street. This project has been well received and has enabled two key Plaza businesses to remain open. Staff are working with the businesses on potential improvements

to this area to address winter business needs and rainy weather.

Parklets: The City has been diligently working to create a parklet program on the Plaza that would allow businesses to maintain expanded outdoor dining space on a longer-term basis. As we enter the winter months, the ability to dine on the Plaza will be less appealing and restaurants are seeking expanded space closer and the ability to use canopies. Parklets have emerged as a way for cities to provide additional public gathering spaces in urban areas and provide for additional service space, wine tasting revenue, and restaurant revenue - in exchange for the use of street parking, loading areas, and/or shoulders. Parklets have been utilized successfully by many cities throughout the United States, including the cities of Seattle, Spokane, San Francisco, and Boise. The parklets locations would be located on the exterior perimeter of the Plaza (business side of Plaza) and would allow businesses to erect tents or other structures to protect diners during the winter and rainy season.

While the creation of parklets will require the removal of some parking spaces, City staff has initially identified options where the City could add parking through changes in regulations, partnerships with other businesses, or leasing parking. If there is the need for more parking, options could be more formally investigated.

Sidewalk Extensions: Some businesses have expressed a preference for sidewalk tables to be located adjacent to the buildings rather than utilizing parklets. City staff has been researching and investigating a number of options including wooden walkways and concrete sidewalk extensions that would meet ADA requirements and provide adequate passing space for both pedestrians and diners alike.

Outreach and Communication: City staff has been working closely with Sonoma Chamber of Commerce, Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau and the Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Association to maintain close communication with the local business community. COVID-19 guidelines have been changing rapidly and City staff endeavors to keep local businesses apprised of their business expansion options. These options often have economic considerations and the ongoing outreach and communication is key to creating a program that will be successful and sustainable for the businesses.

Conclusion

These efforts have taken concerted efforts of various City staff, Council Sub-Committee and outside business support. The key team members are listed here ...

Council Sub-Committee

Mayor Logan Harvey

Vice Mayor Rachel Hundley

City Staff

Wendy Atkins, Associate Planner

Mike Baraz, Police Sergeant

Cathy Capriola, City Manager

Sue Casey, Assistant City Manager

Colleen Ferguson, Public Works Director

Lisa Janson, Special Events Manager

Orlando Rodriguez, Police Chief

Trevor Smith, Sonoma Valley Fire Department

David Storer, Planning Director

Kristina Tierney, Associate Planner
Wayne Wirick, Development Services Director

Business Partners

Mark Bodenhamer, SV Chamber of Commerce
Maureen Cottingham, SV Vintners & Growers Alliance
Tim Zahner, SV Visitors Bureau

Recommended Council Action

Hear report from staff and provide additional direction or input.

Alternative Actions

Council discretion.

Financial Impact

No immediate impact.

Environmental Review

Status

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Impact Report | <input type="checkbox"/> Approved/Certified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Declaration | <input type="checkbox"/> No Action Required |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt | <input type="checkbox"/> Action Requested |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable | |

Alignment with Council Goals:

Not Applicable

Compliance with Climate Action 2020 Target Goals:

N/A

CC:

Mark Bodenhamer, SV Chamber of Commerce
Maureen Cottingham, SV Vintners & Growers Alliance
Tim Zahner, SV Visitors Bureau