

Offered by Councilor Kenzie Bok



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING PLANNING TO SUPPORT OUR RESTAURANTS AND BARS

- WHEREAS:* The Massachusetts Restaurant Association reported that approximately 3,600, or about 20%, of all restaurants in Massachusetts have permanently closed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and many restaurants and bars important to our communities here in Boston are among those that have had to close their doors; *and*
- WHEREAS:* A large number of bars have been unable to viably operate with a food menu and at reduced capacity and so have not reopened at all; *and*
- WHEREAS:* These closures have many downstream impacts, including lack of employment for restaurant workers and loss of rental tenants for commercial landlords, including small and local landlords, and the loss of neighborhood vitality and key community gathering spaces; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Boston risks permanently losing many of its independent operators of bars and restaurants in this crisis, to be replaced by chains and entities with significant capital reserves; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Outdoor dining in Boston on the many patios -- facilitated by the City's temporary COVID-19 policies, including small reopening grants, expedited approval processes, and provision of ADA accessibility ramps -- has proven to be successful, helping many restaurants stay in business while providing safe and socially-distanced dining opportunities for patrons; *and*
- WHEREAS:* Governor Charlie Baker announced last week his intention to sign an executive order extending the time frame that restaurants can utilize outdoor dining; *and*
- WHEREAS:* With winter approaching, many restaurant owners are deeply concerned about their prospects of staying open with reduced business and will need support as they seek to increase takeout or delivery service, safely provide indoor dining, and/or equip their outdoor spaces for the cold weather by purchasing space heaters, heat lamps, and other supplies; *and*

WHEREAS: With sufficient prior planning, the City could better support restaurants both by driving safe business to them over the coming winter months and enabling a better recovery in 2021; *and*

WHEREAS: A format of city-sponsored outdoor “Christmas markets” in Boston’s main streets and Main Streets Districts might help both restaurants and retail establishments have a safe and successful holiday season this December; *and*

WHEREAS: Many restaurant owners would benefit from confirmation that a streamlined process for outdoor dining will continue in the 2021 season, as well as confirmation of likely beginning and ending dates and of how much outdoor space they can expect to access, so that they may invest in necessary furniture, lighting, and other outdoor dining supplies; *and*

WHEREAS: Bars and restaurants would also benefit from plans to safely increase outdoor pedestrian traffic for the 2021 season, including by making streets pedestrian-only, planning the return of pedestrian events like Open Newbury and Open Charles, and proactive marketing; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss how we can best support our restaurants and bars through the winter and help owners to plan for a robust 2021 outdoor season, and that representatives from the Mayor’s Administration, including from the Office of Small Business Development, the Office of Economic Development, the Licensing Board, the Transportation Department, the Public Works Department, and the Inspectional Services Department, along with the Massachusetts Restaurant Association, restaurateurs, bar owners, industry employees, and members of the public be invited to testify.

Filed on: September 14, 2020