

Summary of the City of Minneapolis Licensing Staff Meeting on Street Food

Central Library, March 16, 2010

Notes Compiled By Emily Schnobrich of Heavytable.com

About the ordinance:

- maximum of 25 street vendors at any time
- all vendors must already have a kitchen license within Minneapolis
- start up fees equal around \$400-500
- vendors pay the same taxes as other downtown businesses
- vendors must draw up a diagram of vehicle and location (which is permanent)
- vendors may sell from 7am to midnight, or until 10pm in very residential areas
- vending area is limited to Downtown--want to make it a small project at first, to see if it works
- vehicle may not block walkways or an entrance to another establishment
- vendor applications/locations will be reviewed based on where they are most likely to be successful
- carts can potentially operate all year long

Stated purpose of ordinance: increase vitality of downtown, draw community members, increase foot traffic, encourage people to come back and spend time downtown

- Research has been done in other street vending cities such as Seattle, Portland, Austin, Phoenix
- Doug Kress (Council Member Assistant to Lisa Goodman) emphasized idea that these mobile units must leave their vending area at night. they are not permanent, they are self-contained
- Property owners must approve a vendor selling near their property

Community members' comments:

- maybe allow longer selling hours, to accommodate the bar crowd
- will frying devices in vehicles have suppression systems to prevent destructive fires?
- how can we all (restaurant folk) take advantage of this change without crossing our fellow industry members?
- will vending increase the number of vacant street fronts downtown?
council's answer: no, because only 25 vendors are allowed to have licenses, and it will hopefully draw more foot traffic to the area in general
- how can already established restaurants compete with vendors, who have much lower taxes and fees?
- why start this project now, when the Twins stadium is finally opening up and restaurants are hoping to gain back the business they've been losing recently?
- why not do more research on the impact on the downtown economy? (the council has not done this yet)

- why not wait until after this summer with the Twins, to see what that does for businesses downtown, and so that it does not skew the data?
- how will we deal with the trash left by customers who buy from vendors and then stroll away?
- can the council help out already established restaurants by guaranteeing them a vending license, to make up for the exorbitant taxes and fees they already pay to be downtown? perhaps prohibit vendors from being in front of competing restaurants?

Businesses that were represented:

- Hell's Kitchen
- Melting Pot
- a few bars and pubs that did not share their names

Out of about 60 people present, at least nine spoke up against the ordinance.

NEXT ACTION: A public hearing will be held Monday, March 22 at 1:30pm in Room 317, Minneapolis City Hall.