

FOOD TRUCK POLICY ADVISORY GROUP
12/9/13 MEETING SUMMARY

The meeting was called to order by the Convener at 6:10 p.m. There were no comments on the 11/18/13 meeting summary. The meeting began with comments from the Advisory Group members on the feasibility of food trucks in Old Town.

- There is a need for food trucks at special events and parades; however, for the most part, there is not enough demand for the existing restaurants. Alexandria is an expensive place to do business. Because food trucks do not have the same expenses, they will have to be carefully regulated.
- The staff proposal outlined only three areas for the King Street corridor based on the geometry. In front of King Street Gardens makes sense because of the lack of alternatives for fast food in that area. Market Square could gain vitality with food trucks, but is not sure how many trucks will show up because there may not be enough demand. Not really concerned about the spaces in front of the Courthouse.
- If Georgetown does not have food trucks, why should Old Town? We need to look for conducive spaces. I believe that food trucks should be allowed.
- Trucks go under the Whitehurst Freeway in Georgetown on the weekends. They are not on M Street because the sidewalks are too narrow. Likes the three locations proposed for the King Street corridor. Thinks King Street Gardens is an area that food trucks could attract customers to. Foggy Bottom in D.C. is working for food trucks. The Courthouse would be good. City Hall is also good. No one can eat at Subway or Potbelly every day; food trucks bring variety. There will always be some who want to sit down in a restaurant. My commissary is here, and I want my business to be as well-known as other businesses.
- The philosophical differences will not change. Does not think it is appropriate for the City to favor one form of business over another. The market should decide as long as there are reasonable regulations. Food trucks are allowed by law in Georgetown. They do not go there because of the constraints. Food truck vendors have no issue with not allowing vending in residential areas because they are a commercial operation. Thinks that the three spots in the King Street corridor are good from a public safety perspective. Has discusses Union Street near the park at the end of King Street and another location on Union Street with his colleagues. Food trucks need to be able to have cross-promotional activity with entities such as the Potomac River Boat Company. Instead of defining a specific number of feet a truck should be from outdoor dining, suggested language is "...immediately adjacent to a sidewalk café." Questioned proposed hours of operation (7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.) in the staff proposal. Not aware of the rationale for these restrictions. Are there health and safety reasons? Hours of operation should be similar to other businesses.

- Old Town and Del Ray are the attractions that differentiate Alexandria from other jurisdictions. Food trucks should go through the same hoops as restaurants because we want to preserve these areas. City Hall and the Courthouse would not be regulated for food trucks like restaurants for aesthetics. Questioned the impact of parking spaces being removed for the King Street Gardens location on businesses on Diagonal Road.
- Food truck vendors are not going to go where there is no demand. Restaurants are not going out of business because of food trucks. Does not see a conflict between food trucks and restaurants anymore. What are the parameters of Old Town? King Street Gardens would be a perfect location. The Courthouse is another good location for people who run out to get something quick. The Advisory Group needs to consider the intelligence of food vendors. They are not going to antagonize restaurants. Food trucks are at the Arlington Courthouse on Wilson Boulevard.

The public discussion comments are summarized below.

- Started out selling ice cream at TC Titans games. Now offer cold cut salads and sandwiches. Food trucks should be allowed at end of Pendleton Street by the park, the end of the street by the Braddock Metro, and at Potomac Yard. Personally does not want to come to Old Town because of the parking problems.
- Came to the Scottish Walk and had no problem getting hot chocolate and a salad. Is adamantly opposed to food trucks in Old Town. Waterfront Plan and food trucks send a mixed message to tourists. There is a split personality for upscale tourism and this class of people. Based on personal preference, every kind of cuisine wanted is offered in Old Town. Food trucks are ok at sporting events in lieu of tailgating and at BRAC. There is enough bedlam at the Farmers Market already - do not need food trucks there.
- Food trucks should not be allowed in Founders Park and Oronoco Bay Park. Concerned about leaving decision on whether to allow in specific parks to the Director of Recreation's discretion. The Founder Park Association is dedicated to maintaining a sense of tranquility in Founders Park. Food trucks would not have tranquility. There are places along Union Street during First Night where food trucks can park. (Recreation staff stated that their intent is not to use food trucks outside of sporting venues.)
- Recreation Directors come and go. They should not have the discretion to decide. Ft. Ward should not be allowed to have food trucks. They should not be allowed in residential areas. Regulating trucks is a problem. Do not kid yourself that you can limit to three sites in Old Town. Commitments change. A deal is not a deal anymore. Decks are allowed in areas where the Planning Commission and City Council initially said they would be prohibited.

- The person in charge can change. If you do not want food trucks in an area, it should be spelled out in the ordinance. If you do not regulate food trucks, you will get anything. Food trucks would be interested in King and Washington Streets. Washington Street is a concern. Need to take Washington Street out of the mix. In D.C., food trucks are where they are needed. Group needs to identify areas where there is a need. Old Town no; BRAC and Carlyle should be considered. Upscale food trucks are at Farragut Square, but on the Mall, you can get anything. No to King Street Gardens location; does not see a compelling need at the King Street Metro Station. Food trucks as a solution to bad planning is not good. Office buildings should have planned to feed workers. There is no problem with finding food in Old Town. We have a system that works. At the end of the day, you need to figure out what you want so you can have upscale trucks. (Food Truck Association members noted that it is difficult to regulate demand; the market rules. Also noted that the Mall is now regulated.)
- Owns a food truck and a catering business that serves Puerto Rican cuisine in Alexandria. The truck visits condos on invitation; owner does not go to residential areas or parks. Advisory Group needs to consider what the customer wants. It is not about taking business from restaurants. Restaurants sell alcohol and food trucks cannot. His food truck has 100 – 200 sales every Friday night at Port City Brewery. Wants to build his business.
- Restaurant revenues are down 30 percent. Most small restaurants are the size of food trucks. The trucks are directly competitive. Have used the food trucks at Farragut Square and in New York City. Do not need them at First Night. Agrees that food trucks give the wrong impression of Old Town. Courthouse and Royal Street blocks are full of street and pedestrian traffic. Trucks will not compete with Union Street Pub and Theismann's. Will support in residential areas as a catering operation. Parks in Old Town should be off limits.
- Fundamentally, we will never agree on food trucks. We have decided to live in a place that is very regulated. Health and living wage have to be paid benefits. The business community is part of it. During First Night and the George Washington Parade, his business was off 15 percent for both events. It is not fair to not have a level playing field. Food carts failed because of lack of density. Food trucks are needed in certain areas.
- My commissary is on Wheeler Avenue. Ten members of the DMV Food Truck Association are Alexandria-based businesses. We are familiar with regulations that preserve a historical heritage. Georgetown is no longer a draw in D.C. The hot areas are Penn Quarter and NoMa. Any new restaurant attracts customers for about four weeks. Then the customers migrate back to their regular places. You cannot prove that any restaurant closed because of food trucks. Food trucks generated \$3.4 million in sales taxes for the District last year.

The meeting ended with the Convener thanking everyone for their comments and noting that the next meeting will center on the matrix and determining where there is consensus. The next meeting date is Monday, January 6, at 6:00 p.m.