

# Norfolk allows food trucks in metered spaces

## NORFOLK

The push for food trucks downtown has yielded a compromise that will allow the vendors to serve while keeping them away from traditional restaurants.

Food trucks will compete for six metered parking spaces through a lottery that will be held in June, under a plan approved Tuesday by the City Council. Assistant City Manager Ron Williams said the food trucks could be serving in downtown by mid- to late June.

It's a cautious approach, but even so, it is a good starting point, said Evan Harrell, owner of the Hubcap Grill food truck.

Harrell said he would like to see the city one day add more spaces downtown and adopt a "wide-open" approach on the periphery of downtown, especially in the arts and design district on Granby Street, north of Brambleton.

For now, the permitted trucks will rotate among the six spaces on a weekly basis during lunchtime. Outside of lunch, the vendors can choose any of the six designated spots on any given day. Those spaces will be located on Freemason Street, Plume Street at MacArthur Square, Bank Street near MacArthur Square and north of Brambleton on Granby Street.

Each vendor will pay an annual fee to offset the lost parking revenue. For a food truck, that will mean \$1,390 per year; for pushcarts, the fee will be \$790.

Established food trucks such as the Hubcap Grill already are paying a portion of that, but a downtown district vendor fee and a fire inspection fee will be new. That will cost Harrell about \$800 more annually, he said.

"I think that's fair," he said. "The last thing we want to do is take money away from the city."

The council has been debating the regulations for several months, and the version that was approved Tuesday night had been significantly revised to address the concerns of restaurateurs. In December, the Planning Commission voted to allow food trucks on public and private property downtown. The council voted to allow them in the public right-of-way in downtown, giving the city more control.

The ordinance passed on a 5-1 vote, with Councilman Andy Protogyrou voting against it. Councilwoman Theresa Whibley, the lead proponent on council, and Councilman Paul Riddick were absent. Protogyrou said he's not opposed to food trucks, but "putting them in the heart of downtown where I've just seen two businesses close at this point, in this economy, I can't go for it during those tender lunch hours."

Mayor Paul Fraim said that the council "heard from a strong constituency" that didn't want the food trucks downtown. He said Tuesday that the city wanted to "walk into this."

"We try to strike balance in what we do here," Fraim said.

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**Source URL (retrieved on 05/22/2013 - 08:57):** <http://hamptonroads.com/2013/05/norfolk-allows-food-trucks-metered-spaces>