

# Food trucks may be allowed downtown - with limits

## NORFOLK

The city may allow food trucks downtown, but they would be limited to six designated parking spaces.

Two of the spaces would be in the proposed arts district north of Brambleton Avenue on Granby Street, two more on Freemason Street close to Granby, and one on Plume Street and another on Bank Street, both near MacArthur Square. Permits could be granted through a lottery system.

City staff members pitched the proposal at Tuesday's City Council meeting. The council will continue to debate the issue, possibly voting in April. City staffers have also recommended a phased approach so the impact of the businesses can be studied.

The proposal would force food trucks to close by midnight, but Councilwomen Theresa Whibley and Angelia Williams said mobile vendors should be entitled to the same hours as other downtown businesses, which can stay open until 2 a.m.

Council members have resisted the push to allow mobile vendors downtown because of a fear among traditional restaurant owners that the trucks, with their lower overhead, would hurt brick-and-mortar businesses. Tuesday's recommendation was intended to be a compromise, according to Mayor Paul Fraim.

Re:Vision Norfolk originally pushed to allow the trucks citywide, including in downtown where they are currently prohibited, but later narrowed its focus to downtown. The Downtown Norfolk Civic League and the Downtown Norfolk Council both support food truck-friendly laws for downtown. The Planning Commission unanimously voted in December to allow food trucks on public and private property downtown.

"It's fascinating and frustrating to see the influence of a select few in the face of an issue otherwise shown to be overwhelmingly supported by the public," said Drew Ungvasky, vice president of Re:Vision and owner of Grow Interactive on Granby Street.

"Council should encourage new ideas, new energy, and new investment in this city, rather than chipping away at the opportunity to favor one business model over another, or deciding whose investments are more important," he said.

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