



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

November 4, 2020

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Garrett Toy, Town Manager

SUBJECT: Provide direction to staff regarding the closure and uses of the lower portion of Mono Parking Lot.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide direction to staff regarding the closure and uses of the Mono Parking Lot.

BACKGROUND

In June 2020, the Council took actions to allow for outdoor dining and business uses. One action was that the Council granted staff authority to close portions of the Mono Parking lot for outdoor seating. This was in response to County Health Orders limiting the indoor capacity of restaurants due to COVID-19. We started closing the lower portion of the Mono Parking lot from Thursday through Sunday, as approved by the Council. The Chamber of Commerce volunteers and Gestalt Haus have teamed up to set up the tables, chairs, and umbrellas as well as to clean the tables and chairs between uses. Staff has added a temporary ADA parking space on Bolinas Road and a temporary ADA space at the top of the lot when the lower portion of the lot is closed. Signage has been created and installed to inform people how to access the lot from Bank Street. Volunteers graciously painted the parking lot to make it more festive. It should be noted that Gestalt Haus customers are also using the Mono Parking lot when closed, but Gestalt Haus has indicated it would no longer close the Mono Alley for its use.

DISCUSSION

At its October 28th meeting, the Council received a presentation from the Chamber of Commerce regarding its user and business surveys of the Mono parking lot. The Chamber's on-line survey among other questions asked participants their opinion of the use of the area and their interest in closing the lower portion of the lot for more than 4 days per week. The Council also requested more signage in the area regarding the uses and ensuring that downtown patrons know the lot is open to the public. The Council continued the matter to this meeting for further discussion and direction to staff.

Below are four options for Council consideration regarding the closure of the lower portion of the Mono parking lot:

- 1) Continue closing the Mono parking lot from Thursday to Friday.
- 2) Allow the closure of the Mono lot for special events such as local craft booths on days other than Thursday thru Sunday.
- 3) Close the lot 7 days per week.
- 4) Reduce the number of days the Mono lot can be closed

At the Council meeting, the Chamber stated that in order to make the lot more inviting it would require improvements (e.g., plants, bike racks) that would be difficult to set up and remove every week. If the lot was closed for seven (7) days that would mitigate the need for set-up and removal every week. In addition, it could allow for the consideration of improvements such as tents to better weatherize the space during the winter months.

Staff believes it would be premature to close the parking lot 7 days a week before the Chamber and/or Town has surveyed the community and businesses to obtain their input on the matter for Council consideration. In addition, staff needs time to evaluate the costs for managing the space including any required set-up, storage, and cleaning of the tables and chairs. The current structure of using volunteers and Gestalt Haus to manage the space would not work for a 7-day per week closure, nor would it be sustainable over a longer period of time. Presumably, any closure of the Mono lot would continue through Spring 2021 similar to TEP's (temporary encroachment permits) and TUP's (temporary use permits) issued to businesses by the Town.

We recommend an interim step which allows the closure of the Mono lot for special events on days other than Thursday thru Sunday. Many downtown businesses are closed Monday and/or Tuesday and there should be minimal impact to businesses. In addition, it is easier to manage and give advance notice of such special events.

Staff is working on the cost estimates associated with managing the current closure and the potential costs for closing the lot more than four days per week. We should have these estimates available at the meeting to assist the Council in its decision-making process.

FISCAL IMPACT

n/a