

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

JUNE 14, 2023

A meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee was held Wednesday, June 14, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber.

The roll call was taken with 4 members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee present:

Alderman-at-Large Melbourne Moran, Jr.
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr., Vice-Chair
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons
Alderman Derek Thibeault

Members not in Attendance: Alderman June M. Caron

Also in Attendance: Alderman Richard A. Dowd
Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director
Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Alderman Dowd

Does the public hearing have to have a quorum of the Board of Aldermen or just the PEDC?

Chairman Moran

No just for the PEDC. Alderman Caron informed me that she was out today because she is not feeling too well. All right. So before we open the public hearing for public comment, Director Sullivan I believe you have a presentation for us.

PUBLIC HEARING

O-23-055

AMENDING THE ZONING MAP BY REZONING LAND OFF ALONG THE AMHERST STREET CORRIDOR FROM GENERAL BUSINESS (GB) TO GENERAL BUSINESS WITH MIXED USE OVERLAY DISTRICT (GB/MU), FROM PARK INDUSTRIAL (PI) TO PARK INDUSTRIAL WITH MIXED USE OVERLAY DISTRICT (PI/MU), AND FROM HIGHWAY BUSINESS (HB) TO HIGHWAY BUSINESS WITH MIXED USE OVERLAY DISTRICT (HB/MU)

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Thank you Mr. Chair. For the record, Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director for the City of Nashua. I will be brief with my remarks this evening. For those that may remember back on I believe it was October 22 of 2022, Planning Manager Sam Durfee and I gave a far lengthier presentation on really two specific areas in the City that were potential candidates for a mixed use overlay rezoning. Those being the Amherst Street corridor and the Daniel Webster Highway corridor.

As a result of that presentation back in October, I think it was clear as a consensus of this Committee that we were not going to proceed with the Daniel Webster corridor rezoning but were in fact going to proceed with a mixed use overlay rezoning along the Amherst Street corridor. What I won't do tonight is talk about in detail the ImagiNashua Master Plan, the existing conditions. I think we covered that in great detail back at that October meeting. I'll just briefly talk about what the mixed-use overlay is. It's rough base in the ImagiNashua Master Plan, what the extent of the rezoning will be, and then of course answer any questions that you have that might aid in your decision this evening. What I will represent though is that the Planning Board unanimously recommended this at its last Planning Board meeting and I think there was a fair level of consensus from the Aldermen as well that this was a good idea to move forward as evidenced by the number of sponsors presented before you.

So before I get into the detail of the proposed rezoning itself, just to take a step back and I apologize for the visuals being a bit small but I wanted to set some context within the ImagiNashua 2021 Master Plan that was completed for the City of Nashua. If you do remember, there were several sort of priority redevelopment or focus areas that were included within that plan for particularly rezoning as part of the City's comprehensive Land Use Code update which I'm happy to give an update on later in the meeting tonight perhaps. These areas were all identified for potential rezoning. Each one has a different set of priorities and objectives but certainly Daniel Webster corridor and, again, the Amherst Street corridor were

identified as areas where there was a need to introduce a more flexible form of zoning that would produce a more predictable form from a form perspective but a less predictable form from a use perspective at least vision moving forward.

So if you're not familiar right now, I guess I'll just cover briefly a little more in depth. Some of the recommendations related specifically to this were the increase of height and density along the corridor, much of which is currently commercially zoned with very limited residential permitted uses and really encouraging land uses that would be really more comprehensive redevelopment of the property along the corridor. One of the things I'll point out is this graphic down in the lower right-hand side. If you orient yourself, obviously this is the Amherst Street corridor right in the middle here. There's an idea of building a much more active street frontage along the length of the corridor from really I would say that really the full length up to really the Everett Turnpike. Here, we're prioritizing a portion of that area but this cross section is what was envisioned for the properties along the corridor. So again, a vertical development up at the street frontage, limited parking areas behind that would be shared then with some of the more institutional office space, and other uses that we see to the rear of these properties right now recognizing there's a very a diverse mix of uses along the corridor right now in those commercial categories.

But again, the idea was to adjust the dimensional constraints and produce a more predictable product from a look and feel perspective while being more flexible when it comes use. So I want to be really clear before I get into the recommendation itself that we do anticipate that this will be opened up for discussion as part of that comprehensive land use recodification but this mixed use overlay proposal before you this evening is a bit of a band aid or a pilot, if you will, to see by installing this more flexible zoning whether it in fact incentivizes redevelopment of some of the properties along the corridor that might be ripe for redevelopment. So that's really why we're moving forward with this tonight with the basis being the ImagiNashua plan.

To give a sense of what exists out there today and I know this is a bit hard to see but I'll try to quickly walk you through this, Amherst Street itself runs right here to the north of Round Pond, all the way down to Somerset Parkway, with some sort of interesting plan residential development back in the residential areas, and then all the way down here towards the Everett Turnpike which is down in this area. It's a mix of zoning today. There's a mixture of highway business, general business, park industrial, and then some sprinkling of higher density to medium density residential set back from the Amherst Street corridor as well but generally the parcels fronting on Amherst street proper are commercially zoned with limited residential allowances for permitted uses. So if somebody wanted to come in and do a vertical redevelopment that had a mixed-use component to it, it would not be allowed by right today. It would be something that would require a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment which is as we know a very high bar to attain.

Thus the proposal is to install a component of existing zoning that we've implemented throughout the city and this is the mixed use overlay district. I would argue it's our most flexible overlay in the city. It essentially passes the traditional zoning relief powers granted to the Zoning Board onto the Planning Board as part of the site plan review process. So what that means is that a developer or an applicant is required to meet a set of criteria that are generally use compatibility, character based, public safety, and general welfare standards, and if they meet those criteria although the use may not be allowed by the underlying zoning, the Planning Board can actually grant them use relief to put that use or to allow that use where it would not otherwise be permitted. But again, there are controls in place. There are a set of standards that the Board has to consider, the applicant has to present a site plan suitability report, and so I want to recognize that or at least convey that this is a flexible zone, I want to also be clear that there are still zoning standards in place, there's still criteria that need to be met, and all of the site plan regulations that customarily apply to an application would still apply to the proposal here. So we're not getting rid of all the regulation. We're simply making the Planning Board more nimble in allowing other uses along the corridor by installing this mixed-use overlay.

So let's get to the real I think the meat and potatoes of this, and again I assume these are within your packets so I apologize for having the small version up here. We've taken the Committee's advice back at that October meeting and recommended an extent of MU overlay that goes all the way up to the Market Basket Plaza and really sort of Northwest Boulevard here, extends back to the rear of the properties that are currently zoned highway business and general business, and then extends all the way down really to - I'm going to use this property as an identifier but the Law Family Company and the properties that they own adjacent to Charon Ave. that's really where we've extended this to on the southern side of the border. Now if I'm this Committee and I look at this, I think that's a very small area to be rezoned. What's important to understand is that if we were to draw a larger rectangle along this entire area of the corridor that maybe we wanted to rezone as mixed use, a substantial part of that area is already zoned MU overlay. So this step has already been taken in some portions of the corridor. That's why this action before you this evening is only these remaining red areas and so if approved, this mixed-use overlay would cover really a massive area along the Amherst Street corridor filling in the gaps created by prior rezoning of the area.

So this is the request before you this evening to install the mixed use overlay district along the Amherst Street corridor to the extent represented here. Again, this really is just a key that potentially unlocks future development or redevelopment opportunity. It's incumbent upon the development community to actually express an interest in doing mixed use development in this area. But as I represented before, we have seen real developer interest in doing mixed use here and we've actually had folks come in with the visuals from the ImagiNashua Master Plan and ask how do I do this? Unfortunately to date, we've had to say you can't do it just yet because we don't have the zoning in place. This would allow us to move that conversation forward and so although this is a Band-Aid as I've represented and it's temporary in nature and sort of a pilot, I believe that it is very possible that this sort of year to a year and a half solution could yield some real results when it comes to mixed use development along the corridor.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'm happy to answer any questions that the Committee has or if the public has any comments as well.

Chairman Moran

Should we do the hearing first and then open up the questions at the actual (inaudible). Well if you have clarifying questions.

Alderman Thibeault

I have a clarifying question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So on this map right here where it goes north, or west, or however we want to...

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Sorry I didn't mean to move that.

Alderman Thibeault

So all the way to the west there. Now you say it incorporates Market Basket. Is that very corner the whatever Southern New Hampshire?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

This? Yes great question.

Alderman Thibeault

Is that Greystone Plaza in the front? So it doesn't go right to the edge of Nashua and Merrimack?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Yeah, great question. So no. It actually does not include the uses across Northwest Boulevard. So it really it rides the centerline of Northwest Boulevard all the way to the intersection with the CSX Rail Line, the CSX right of way to the south, and then on the northern end if I were writing a zoning description, I'd say to the thread of the brook up there in the water. That's sort of where it runs to on the northern end. That's the extent of it on the road.

Alderman Thibeault

The road that basically goes to Market Basket, nothing on the other side of it...

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

That's correct.

Alderman Thibeault

And wraps around, gets westward why and that whole section behind Market Basket?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Yes. The reason for excluding the western side of Northwest Boulevard is really that a lot of that is very environmentally constrained and so development opportunities were limited there. You could argue that even this area should not be rezoned but I didn't feel it was necessary nor prudent to rezone that western side based on the environmental constraints that are in place. To be clear, I think that could happen in the future but, you know, we do need to be sensitive in this area. These water bodies here are drinking water source for not only Nashua but other surrounding communities. So we want development that's conscientious and so I do want to be very careful when allowing high density residential use adjacent to the water.

Alderman Thibeault

Great, thank you.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Of course.

Chairman Moran

All right. So I'll open it up for public testimony. I'm pretty sure the rain is keeping people away. This is riveting stuff.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Yeah.

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

The public hearing on O-23-055 was declared closed at 7:12 p.m.

The regular meeting opened at 7:12 p.m.

Regular Meeting

Chairman Moran

Can you re-call the role?

ROLL CALL

The roll re-call was taken with 4 members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee present:

Alderman-at-Large Melbourne Moran, Jr.
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr., Vice-Chair
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons
Alderman Derek Thibeault

Members not in Attendance: Alderman June M. Caron

Also in Attendance: Alderman Richard A. Dowd
Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director
Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Chairman Moran

I know we have you on at the front of the agenda for discussion on outside dining but I think I'll change it up just a bit so Director Sullivan can finish what he's started and that way we don't have to hold him back if that's all right with the remainder of the Committee? Any objections?

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

COMMUNICATIONS

From: Sam Durfee, Planning Director

Re: Referral from the Board of Aldermen on proposed Ordinance O-23-055, amending the zoning map by rezoning land off along the Amherst Street Corridor from General Business (GB) to General Business with Mixed Use Overlay District (GBMU), from Park Industrial (PI) to Park Industrial with Mixed Use Overlay District (PI/MU), and from Highway Business (HB) to Highway Business with Mixed Use Overlay District (HB/MU)

There being no objection, Chairman Moran accepted the communication and placed it on file.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS - None

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES

O-23-055

- Endorsers: Alderman-at-Large Melbourne Moran, Jr.
- Alderman Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.
- Alderman John Sullivan
- Alderman Patricia Klee
- Alderman Thomas Lopez
- Alderman Alex Comeau
- Alderman Richard A. Dowd
- Alderman Derek Thibeault
- Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire

AMENDING THE ZONING MAP BY REZONING LAND OFF ALONG THE AMHERST STREET CORRIDOR FROM GENERAL BUSINESS (GB) TO GENERAL BUSINESS WITH MIXED USE OVERLAY DISTRICT (GB/MU), FROM PARK INDUSTRIAL (PI) TO PARK INDUSTRIAL WITH MIXED USE OVERLAY DISTRICT (PI/MU), AND FROM HIGHWAY BUSINESS (HB) TO HIGHWAY BUSINESS WITH MIXED USE OVERLAY DISTRICT (HB/MU)

MOTION BY ALDERMAN THIBEAULT TO RECOMMEND FINAL PASSAGE

ON THE QUESTION

Alderman Dowd

Would it be possible before the full Board of Aldermen meeting thought it might be tight to get a map with all of the zoning that's going to remain after this is approved from the railroad tracks to the first 200 feet on the north side of Amherst Street so we know which zonings are not being impacted.

The other is Michael Buckley is taking over the SNHU property to develop a new restaurant. Is that set with zoning?

Chairman Moran

Director Sullivan.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Yes, Alderman Dowd. To answer your question, yes. We actually intend to produce two graphics in advance of the aldermanic hearing. One will be a final rezoning map. This map that we've included in the packet is not actually to the standard that we would include with the final package. It doesn't require amendments of the zoning that's before you in any way but we'll produce a more I'll use the term professional version that shows the full extent of the proposed zoning.

I can also have prepared what would essentially be an existing zoning map with all the underlying zoning, the existing extent of the mixed use overlay as it is today with a different color or hatching, and then a proposed extent of the MU overlay as it would exist should the ordinance be approved. We can absolutely produce that in advance of the hearing.

And to Mr. Buckley's property, yes that project is fully approved so this rezoning would not impact that proposal in any way, shape, or form. I assume you're referring to I believe its 420 Amherst Street. No, I'm sorry not for 420.

Alderman Dowd

Right near Round Pond.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Yeah I do know what you mean. It's not the right address though but yes that was fully approved.

Alderman Dowd

Okay.

Chairman Moran

Follow up?

Alderman Dowd

Yes. I fully approve of this and as soon as it passes, I will probably step out because I'm not a member of this Committee and I'm fine with downtown dining.

Chairman Moran

Thank you, Alderman Dowd. We can definitely have you join us at some point. Alderman Thibeault?

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So yeah I mean I approve this too. I mean I'm looking forward to seeing the, you know, the whole plan as it goes forward because I think it's needed.

You referred to it in your opening comments and I just needed a reminder or refresher on it. Why did we push off the Daniel Webster corridor for now?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Yeah, great question. The reason that we pushed off the Daniel Webster corridor is that the properties that are not currently mixed use zoned are very limited on the Daniel Webster corridor and very few of those could actually be feasibly redeveloped based on the existing uses that are there. That's not to say we shouldn't install zoning to be, you know, future oriented and look towards the development opportunity but the areas were simply much smaller than we thought they were. Whereas this is actually although it's a partial area, it's actually a fairly significant portion of the corridor, the zoning along the Daniel Webster corridor is incredibly flexible as it is today. There are very few parcels that are not actually under a very flexible zoning.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay, thank you.

Chairman Moran

Alderman O'Brien.

Alderman O'Brien

Yes thank you. Mr. Chairman I support this also but if I through you to Director Sullivan, past history on the Fire department I've had situations where there's been car accidents, one housing development, the painter threw paint down the storm drains. I'm sure that you know that the storm drains and to the people of the City if you happen to see a fish on the curb stone of the storm drain, it means it goes to the public water supply. So on Amherst Street every single storm drain is going right to Pennichuck Pond. Something that we're going to have future and drinking. So as we look at this, can we do better stewardship in protecting the drinking quality?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

That's a great question. One of the great things about redevelopment is not just that its redevelopment and we get new shiny things but it's also that redevelopment gives the City an opportunity and take sites that maybe were not developed in the most responsible way or in a compliant way with our current rules and regulations and it gives us the ability to sort of - it gives us a redo if you will. We have very good stormwater regulations in place that the Engineering Department is the steward of that requires limitations on offsite discharge and a level of treatment as well. So the more redevelopment that we see along the corridor, the more opportunity we have to actually remedy environmental issues that may have been created in the past. I'm not just saying that to say it truly more redevelopment is better opportunity to be better environmental stewards so yes, I think this rezoning opportunity although development oriented has very positive impacts on environmental health as well.

Alderman O'Brien

Follow up if I may? Case in point when I'm talking, I would much rather have the Hostess Corporation with their Hostess cupcakes liquidation sale. My wife would kill me for saying that than compared to having a gas station with potential gas tank leak at some point, possibly at some point. So this is what I'm saying. This might be a better time to look at and evaluate this. What is the occupancy? I mean the building is a building but the occupancy of the building will and can affect us.

Chairman Moran

Director Sullivan.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Yeah and just a follow up comment to two things I don't want to lose sight of it. One being that as part of the New Hampshire DOT's 10-year plan, there is a project to it was initially intended to be a widening of Amherst Street but the priorities have changed. So what's really being discussed now is more of a traffic calming but lane maintenance plan with pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the length of the corridor. The reason I bring that up is that they'll also be stormwater improvements most likely included in that to take some of the road runoff that doesn't necessarily get - isn't subject to our local rules and regulations and maybe install some additional treatment as well. So there's also there's going to be improvements along the corridor for an environmental health perspective related to transportation too.

Alderman O'Brien

One last follow up. Beautiful segway into my next question and that is the State. Is the State going to get involved? Again, I support this but will the State get involved because it's always irked me in the City of Nashua the State raises the plow and does not plow the snow. We take care of it. We take care of Amherst Street but if you go into Amherst for example, the State trucks drop the plow and plow the same section of State road which that's another issue I understand. As a State Representative and looking at it, it's not fair to an urban compact community such as Nashua.

Chairman Moran

Do you want to response to that?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

The only response is yes such is the life of an urban compact community - all the constraint without any of the benefit. That's not a criticism of DOT.

Alderman O'Brien

Oh, go for it.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Well you can, I can't. DOT has really changed their approach to a lot of projects and so I just want to point out in all seriousness, lane widening used to be a huge priority. Moving cars as quickly as possible. Vehicles used to be the priority for an NHDOT. When we approached them to potentially move this towards a more complete streets approach, they were completely on board. They have changed the way that they are looking at roadways and so I give them credit.

Now we will need to engage NHDOT if we were going to do something like this right here. This is a major change that will require significant engagement and will be difficult to garner support from NHDOT because again, as much as this will be our responsibility, it's their road. We're a long way from doing that. I think the carriageway concept particularly is going to be the challenge. The development is frankly more realistic than the carriageway itself is. So we'll be talking to DOT but it's going to be an incremental moving of the ball on some of these more lofty design standard goals.

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you for taking my question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Moran

Alderman Clemons and Alderman Dowd.

Alderman Clemons

Yeah, thank you. In regards to that picture up there and the traffic calming, not a good idea in my opinion. One, you see places like Route 9 in Brookline that look very much like that. In my opinion, they don't work.

Secondly, it is the only major thoroughfare between Milford and Nashua and it carries 100,000 people back and forth on any given weekend or any given day for that matter. So the idea of slowing down traffic on that corridor between the highway and Milford is not something that I think would be a good idea.

Chairman Moran

Alderman Dowd.

Alderman Dowd

One thing to add to that is one time I was having my tires changed and I'm sitting there counting trucks. In two hours, there were about 300 trucks that went by. A lot of truck traffic on Amherst Street.

The other thing is that all of the newest developments out there when they changed hands like especially ones that made gas stations, they have taken efforts to make sure that their drainage from those lots does not go into the ponds. They have different ways of doing it whether it's sloping things to take it towards Amherst Street or putting catch basins that separate stuff. Its different things but it doesn't get into the water supply anymore. So all the new gas stations, a new Shell station, there's several new gas stations and they all have been restricted as to their drainage.

Chairman Moran

Alderman Thibeault.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You guys have opened up all kinds of questions for me just in some of the comments you guys have made. The calming of the traffic. So I mean I've lived off of Amherst Street. So Amherst Street it's busy now and so I see the widening I go, oh yea that would help because there's days I don't want to go up Amherst Street. I'm glad I don't have to anymore. You know my dad lives in South Merrimack and I could go up Amherst Street to get there, go by Market Basket, go by Wendy's, and it's not too far from Pennichuck Square but I don't. I take the highway and I go to Exit 11 and I cut back the other way because I don't want any part of Amherst Street. It would be nice to be able to want to go to Amherst Street because there is a lot of good things on Amherst Street. Lots of good stores, and lots of good places to

go, restaurants. I hope this is going to help us not have every time something closes down there's a bank or a gas station because that's the stuff we're trying - I think I mean we have those everywhere now. So I hope that helps that. I think it's going to.

My last point here and you know Alderman O'Brien kind of opened it up by mentioning fire. Again if we're using calming tactics and we're in the future and/or we're just putting more things on Amherst Street and there's more traffic on Amherst Street. You know he's on Amherst Street now so it's gonna be tons of traffic going to him, right? That's going to make it tougher for fire trucks to get up and down Amherst Street, right? So you know I know this is not your purview but again, it's come up before. A new fire station got to be somewhere in this corridor to be able to cover this section. Especially if we're going to, you know, put a lot more things here, and more traffic or whatnot, we're going to need that. So again not your issue. It's more of the fire stations, and Fire Department, and our purview but.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Mr. Chair if I may? To that point, I think the last time I presented I was very honest about the fact that it can't be done in a vacuum. There are going to be increasing fire demands, there are going to be increasing sewer and water demands, and so it's, you know, if I had Dan Hudson sitting next to me, he'd be kicking me and he knows about this. He's nervous about this kind of thing and very rightfully so. So there will be a need for infrastructure investment if the existing infrastructure is not adequate and that goes for fire service provision as well. I don't want to seem like we're going forth without having those things in place but there will be a moment where there needs to be a very real conversation about whether or not there does need to be a fire station in this area should develop and play out the way that the Master Plan intends. So we're putting the cart before the horse a little bit here but hopefully this brings us closer to discussions on those infrastructure needs that we have.

Alderman Thibeault

Great. Thank you.

Chairman Moran

Alderman O'Brien.

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you. Mr. Sullivan you know that's a pending discussion that's been before this particular Board. I would appreciate it if you rehash it again when you make your full presentation to the Board of Aldermen because I think according to the Fire Department Master Plan is solving by looking at that. If you could have the numbers if you anticipate an increase in population whether it be transcendent or residential with any of that, you know compared to existing now which will help us in making that decision of having an additional fire company.

Chairman Moran

Director Sullivan.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

I'm happy to provide some components of what you're asking for Alderman O'Brien. The only thing I really can't anticipate is potential build-out if you will of the full area. Unfortunately, one of the unpredictable components of the mixed-use overlay is because it's so flexible you simply don't always know what you're going to get but what I can do is I can at least communicate with Chief Buxton and get a sense of what kind of the thresholds would be so we know or have a sense of what level of development would really tip the scales along this corridor such that it would become a more dire need that maybe it already is to have additional fire service out here. I do want to say that we should be doing that build-out exercise in the future to understand what the service demands here will be. I expect that Engineer Hudson will not let us proceed with some redevelopment proposals unless we have some of those numbers. I just don't have them today unfortunately.

Alderman O'Brien

Fair answer. Thank you.

Chairman Moran

Alderman Dowd and Alderman Thibeault.

Alderman Dowd

Yeah, I've been working with Chief Buxton and others on the fire plan. By September of 2024, we'll be done in the schools hopefully. It's time to turn our attention to fire stations. I was also involved in their Master Plan and it calls for a fire station off Amherst Street. There's a lot near Nashua Community College on Thornton Road that's been set aside for a fire station. There's also a plot in Southern Nashua for a fire station. The problem is we have to plan way ahead for that because there's some initial thought about moving an existing company from Amherst Street because we're going to be having to repair that building. Otherwise, we're gonna have an 80,000-pound truck that's cost \$1.3 million in a basement that can't go anywhere. So we're going to be looking at fire stations in the next two or three years. They have to do some planning ahead and probably need to repair some existing fire stations first. They will at some point have to be built. Right now we've got issues with Amherst Street fire stations that need to be addressed. We have issues at the airport fire station that need to be addressed. The problem we have right now is the airport fire station covers Amherst Street. If there's an accident on Charon Avenue or at the intersection of Charon and Amherst Street, forget it. There's no other way to get there. So they need something on the other side of Amherst Street but they can't just close the airport fire station because that's Ward 1. So all that's being looked at and it will probably be in near term next two to five years.

Chairman Moran

Alderman Thibeault.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was up Amherst Street not too long ago and I actually noticed surprisingly some buildings being done. So I'm just kind of curious. I saw one I think near that collision place not too far from Round Pond and then there was one across really from the Community College I think near Dumaine Street or where that gas station is that used to be a bank but looked like a barn with a silo. There might be some other stuff I don't see. Do you know how roughly how many more residential or people that are moving? Like what are we thinking? When we think of like the Bronsteins, we go 250 whatever but how much do we think right now is new to Amherst Street as far as residential?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Yeah, so there are I believe three active residential developments along Amherst Street right now. There's a development or that's recently completed an 8 Blackstone behind the Shell in that location. There was a development done there. There's a development underway on Dumaine Avenue for 24 units and I believe there's another development underway on Dumaine as well. So approximately 60 units have been introduced along the corridor but we've had inquiries on other properties as well that have just not moved forward at this point in time. Not saying zoning is the impediment necessarily but I will say the Dumaine Avenue properties were the result of a rezoning of the Dumaine Avenue properties to MU overlay. So that actually directly facilitated them moving forward with the townhome development that was done there. Aldermen Thibeault it's about 60 right now that are underway along the corridor.

There was a huge development influx of all the apartment buildings that you see off to particularly the southern side and the northern side in some areas too. So Amherst Street is without question an attractive place to live based on the access, and the amenities, and the resources that are there. Unless you're in a development, it's not really a community per se and so I think the idea is to build some connections between those different separate communities along the corridor to create a more almost contiguous Amherst Street neighborhood. Well also to Alderman Clemons' point, this is a major, the major east/west thoroughfare in the City. So we cannot ignore that. Yes planners and urbanists like me can dream that we're going to go to a single lane in each direction. I'm a realist. I mean I know that's not going to happen but can we put those two to three lanes at a configuration that at least makes it feel a little more safe to navigate the corridor? I think the answer is yes.

Alderman Thibeault

Great. Thank you.

Chairman Moran

All right. No more questions or statements? Well Director Sullivan I just want to thank you for your work on this - you and Sam. It was months. It started with me and Alderman Clemons having a side conversation about how we can get more

building to happen for housing in the community and then you turned it into this. Now the next step is to get developers up there. I think that's great. Anything we can do to increase the options for housing in the City will be a wonderful thing plus the mixed-use piece to add restaurants, business all next to residential. Similar to an email that Alderman Sullivan sent out with an article attachment for other towns that are using it.

MOTION CARRIED

DISCUSSION

- Changes to the Downtown Dining Ordinance

Chairman Moran

All right. We'll go back to the discussion. Thank you so much for being here, Director. I appreciate it. See you Alderman Dowd. It's great to meet you. I've seen the interview videos and stuff like that. It was awesome.

So we're looking for conversation on downtown dining. Just to start the conversation now before the next season approaches. My initial thought to bring this up was how's it working? What's the feedback from the community? Is Mother's Day weekend working to the I think it's Labor Day? No October. Columbus Day? Right before Columbus Day and just getting feedback of how it's working for the restaurants and if they're okay with the fees. One of the thoughts I had about the fees is making them equitable and this is how I would describe that. Anyone else can jump in and just talk about it. I think like someone who's grossing maybe \$100,000 a year shouldn't maybe even pay a fee, maybe someone who's grossing \$2 million should pay \$750, and then we have like a range based on how much they're grossing with like a certification they can say on my New Hampshire business taxes I gross X amount from this range. Then we can set a fee, an equitable fee so smaller restaurants aren't kneecapped. I don't know what the thoughts are. Alderman Clemons?

Alderman Clemons

Yeah, I wouldn't go for that. The only thing that I will say from my own and I don't want to usurp what you're here for but the only thing I will say is that I have talked to a lot of the restaurant owners. 99% of - well all of them that have participated this year are happy with it. I would recommend for next year, however, that we keep the fees the way that they are at \$500. The reason that I say that is because this season is going to be cut short because of paving.

Chairman Moran

Oh, yes.

Alderman Clemons

So sometime in mid to late August, those barriers are going to come down. So we had anticipated when we put out the \$500 that that \$500 was going to carry them from May all the way to the middle of October. We are cutting them short because we have to pave Main Street. Now most of the restaurants that I have talked to are okay with that but feel that maybe the City can do something for them in the future meaning and what I take from that is okay we won't raise the fees next year because we sold you something and then midway through, and I was sitting at the Finance Committee meeting here when the paving schedule came up and we had already been out selling this to people, and then all of a sudden it's oh well yeah we have to pave Main Street and we're going to take that back. So my thought is that for next year we should probably try to keep those fees where they were this year only for the fact that they didn't get a full year out of it like we originally told them.

Chairman Moran

I hear you and I support that. One of my thoughts of trying to bring in lower fees for lower grossing restaurants is maybe get more people to utilize the outdoor dining like Joanne's Kitchen, for example, who is not utilizing it this year and there are a lower grossing restaurant as compared to I don't want to use The Flight Center because I saw some articles about them recently but like MT Local.

Alderman Clemons

Well they don't use it. They don't do it anyway.

Chairman Moran

Yeah, well that might be if it's free based on their gross or if they're in the negative, there could be another seat to turn over. The paving thing is leaving it in place for that year because we're cutting them short makes sense but maybe the following year if we have lower grossing restaurants who want to take part of it to maybe increase their revenues, give it to them for free based on their income or a smaller fee. Maybe \$250. I don't know. I was trying to get more people in and make it more equitable but the paving is definitely a big barrier for them if we promised them one thing and they were kind of short. Alderman Thibeault.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you. Yeah I mean I tend to agree there with Alderman Clemons as far as this year. I'm not even sure I'd go for that in the future. I guess I struggle with asking businesses to say tell me what you gross. I don't know, I just feel weird about doing that. I know we've talked about it before in this situation. I was thinking when you guys were talking about Joanne's Kitchen. Are they open at night?

Chairman Moran

No, but they have lunch.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay, so there's a couple of places that don't do nighttime stuff and they might utilize something like that. So the two or three places that do that, do you charge them something different because they don't get the night business which like you say, I don't have to look at their books to know that a night dinner is much more expensive than a breakfast or lunch. So do you charge those businesses that close by two o'clock or three o'clock half of what we're giving the other restaurants \$250? Again, now you're trying to figure out who gets \$250, who gets \$500 but to your point, it would open up those two places two or three places to maybe say okay for \$250 I'll do it. Now, if someone wanted to use their space at night, maybe they pay the other \$250 and they're paying \$750. I don't know. I'm just throwing stuff out there because you want more people to utilize. I know at least one business that utilized last year decided not to utilize it this year because of the \$500. So that's one of those type of businesses that don't have a nighttime service. So I was kind of thinking you know again, how could we get - I don't really want to give it away because then you're like other businesses are like you're giving it away for free? That's still a space that you're giving up. We shouldn't give it for free. I don't know. Again, I'm just throwing that out there to try to find an alternative way to try to handle that.

For this year, I think I agree with leaving it to \$500. Now, again, it still opens to what do you do with the businesses that aren't utilizing it? I don't know.

Chairman Moran

And that's why I wanted to have the conversation early because things like this. The paving come up. I hear the concern about having businesses self-certify their gross. However, we do that for private citizens throughout the City. City Welfare for example and I don't want to be all social work but someone went down and was escaping domestic violence and they said no you have too much money. Tell us how much money you have in order to get services and they didn't get the services they wanted. What's the difference that we have this person seeking welfare services and we make them produce their bank statements and we can't ask the restaurant to self-certify a little box? I just equitable, equitable. Alderman Clemons.

Alderman Clemons

So my issue with charging different things for different people has nothing to do with certifying, asking a restaurant to produce a profit and loss, or with tax return, whatever. It has to do with the fact that every space on Main Street that we put a barrier in front of is a space that somebody can't park in and its revenue lost. The point that most of the public and some of the Aldermen who were against some of this was, was that revenue is being lost and how can we recuperate some of that. Not to say that oh we want to recuperate everything and we want, you know, but have skin in the game, be a partner with the City so that we can get some money and basically put that towards the cost of putting those barriers out and maintaining them, taking them back every year. So the figure of \$500 is what we came up with and to me a parking space is a parking space. Kind of like going through a toll booth, right? Whether you have a Maserati or you're driving my Ford Fiesta, you're paying \$1 to go through the toll. We're not differentiating there between what it is that you're driving based in that and then that's what you're gonna pay, right? I feel that it's the same way with the parking spaces when the barriers aren't there. You find a space, you pay what it costs to park there. With the space itself if you are utilizing that for your restaurant, I feel the fee should be the same across the board for the same reason.

That's just kind of where I'm going with it. I completely understand where you are at as far as like, you know, it would be nice to be able to have it be equity but I think in this particular thing, it is what it is. It's a space. It costs what it costs and you either want to do that or you don't.

Chairman Moran

I'm just going to throw this out there. It doesn't mean anyone has to answer. How do we get more people to join if they're smaller? Is there hey a pilot one year, we'll give you a shot without cost even though we're charging other restaurants this? How do we get more engaged because overall, it's a betterment for the City the more people that are utilizing the space? Alderman O'Brien.

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you. Mr. Chairman I would recommend to this Committee to probably look at what we did in Infrastructure when we first when this was in its infancy when we brought it up and we discuss barriers and everything. My only deep regret being Chairman of that Committee is that we picked the concrete barriers. They were at that particular time, we had a high value on security and safety. I think those have met the need and is still viable to this day. Are they attractive? Well, okay. Then we tried painting them and the art critic amongst us complained about the artwork. Art is in the eyes of the beholder. You can't convince them all. You know what I mean? Some people say Mona Lisa isn't smiling, and she's smiling, I don't know. But anyways but to take a step back, there's one thing that the Infrastructure Committee did was get a hold of the stakeholders and that is the restaurants and have like a meeting, talk to Mary Lou Blaisdell, get people together, and then come in, and then they can come in with this Committee and find out what it is.

I kind of like one flat rate across the board. You bring up a good point. I'm not against maybe first year granting to get somebody introductory but in the case of Joanne's, that's a breakfast place. They're not open that night so you want this.

Then with the Art Center, we haven't seen the full compilation of what's going to happen with the Performing Arts. I see that occupancy of Main Street changing. Some great places that existed for years may not be here because they're not really, you know, I look at the Performing Arts Center will be a generator of different types of things. I hate to see all restaurants downtown too but we'll see where the course, natural progression of business kind of takes us. It appears and I congratulate Alderman Clemons because being on Infrastructure yeah, we are going to pave Main Street. I am gonna fight tooth and nail. I am not putting in a heavy concrete barrier on fresh laid tarmac. We'll have a permanent dip. But the thing is so maybe we do have the time but there's other benefits that came out of this that really nobody saw on the horizon because of the lack of breaks in the system. People are actually using the crosswalks because they're not like, you know, my days of jumping over concrete barriers are over too. You know what I mean? So I'll walk a couple extra feet to take the crosswalk.

We brought Main Street down from four lanes to two lanes. Once we solved the problems around the Peddler's Daughter and stopped the impediment of the traffic flow going down Canal Street, I think we greatly increased the flow of traffic and we slowed it down. That's kind of what we want. I mean if you look if you're sitting out there nighttime dining, you know, I remember some Aldermen were wondering will people be stealing french fries while they're riding their motorcycles over the barriers. Thank God that hasn't happened but it was a legitimate concern.

In looking at it, there's been a lot of great things that came out of it too that isn't really have a dollar amount to it. So you gotta weigh the balance with that equally as well. So I would suggest again going back to a meeting with the stakeholders. I'm all in favor of charging what they feel what is the marketable price, and how much that's worth to them, and then come out with a cost across the board and keeping in mind of the places like the Joanne's that may not be, like I say, a high impact or something like that. It's enough to go around and it seems like we have the time to do it so thank you.

Chairman Moran

And I'm hoping that at the end of this meeting that we give direction to Director Hannum to say go to the Downtown Improvement Committee and find out these facts for us and bring it back so we don't make decisions in a vacuum. So thank you Alderman O'Brien.

Alderman O'Brien

Oh, thank you all. I think it's great.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Alderman. Thank you, Chairman. So you know we did - obviously, we went to them last year and I think what we found out is the \$500 was kind of a compromise because I think there was some people out there that I don't want to pay more than \$300. We had one Alderman, I think it was Alderman Jette because I think he was quoting Portsmouth and some of the other towns that have a different - Portsmouth is a destination. Nashua is not yet a destination. Obviously we'd love to make it one. It's usually a drive through to get to Manchester, or Concord, or anything. Portsmouth is so you can pay \$1,000 for a parking space over in Portsmouth but we know the temperature here is the businesses would not pay \$1,000. We went back and forth. I mean these meetings we were going back and forth. I think Tim had come and he had talked to some businesses and some of the Alderman talked to some businesses. Some people were like well if it's going to be \$700, I'm not going to do it. We were thinking \$250 - \$300 that's too low. So I think \$500 kind of took into account those businesses that make a ton of money to the ones that are lower. I think most of them actually signed on to it. There was a couple that didn't.

We believe the Nashua Center for the Arts is going to increase traffic. I've talked to people that have gone to shows and if you don't get a reservation, you're not getting into a restaurant. Even last weekend we had two shows, I believe Menopause the Musical. From what I was told, the restaurants were packed. So we know people are going to these restaurants and using it. Now is that generating so much extra income that we're like we can bump it to \$600? We can bump it to \$650. Obviously, those people that weren't going to pay \$500 probably still aren't going to pay \$500 because if they're places like Joanne's, or JaJa Belle's, that kind are open during the day, they're not getting that generation of extra money that the restaurants at night are getting. A five o'clock or an eight o'clock show, they're not open on the weekends or even during the week. So I don't know, I mean it's tricky. I mean you want to keep involvement because it's good to have that involvement. You want them to generate money because that only helps us as a City. I don't know. I mean I know we're gonna have some people come in here and go let's charge them \$5,000 a space or whatever ridiculous stuff. So we have to find some kind of compromise where we know we'll still get people using the spots but still generating at least some of the revenue. People want to get every single dollar and every single nickel back that we're giving up and giving out these spaces. That's just not reasonable or it's just not you know, rational. It's not what's going to happen but we've got to get as much as we can without making the business's not want to do it. So what is that middle ground? \$500 this year. What's that middle ground maybe it is next year with the paving but beyond that, where are we going, right? I don't know.

Chairman Moran

Yeah and I agree that you know trying to recoup all the costs that we lost in revenue, that's not part of a public/private partnership. You're looking to find that middle ground in order to and get more activity downtown by charging reasonable fees. My thought process is we get more people in if we can and then whether the current people stay at 5 and you say to smaller, oh do you want to give us a shot, here's another 250. Pay \$250, you can have a spot. I was at breakfast with my daughter last Sunday at Joanne's and I think to myself if there's space there right next to the Farmers Market, people are gonna walk down see that the breakfast is open. They're gonna enjoy breakfast and then go down to the Farmers Market right after on a Sunday. It's just part of like human behavior. If you see people out there eating, they're gonna be like I'm gonna stop at this place it looks good and that visual of people outside eating whether it's breakfast, lunch, or dinner has to migrate to the where the activity is.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you. It's gonna be a question to you actually. So those places that don't currently have spaces do they use any of the outside sidewalk? Like do they currently do outside dining?

Chairman Moran

Some of them do, yes. Like the Greek place.

Alderman Clemons

Main Street Gyro.

Chairman Moran

Main Street Gyro, yes. Those are the kinds of businesses I'm thinking of because they are owned by Seven Star.

Alderman Thibeault

But they are using the...

Chairman Moran

They are using the street dining there. So my thought is how do we get more people involved, utilize space as needed, and maybe charge them a smaller fee, and clearly here there's no flavor for raising the fee for higher earning restaurants. Again, I'm a social worker so echo billing is like driven into my brain. We can always discuss that after next year when the paving is not an impact. Alderman Clemons.

Alderman Clemons

Yeah and I agree. I would agree with your last comment there that I think next year I think that around this time, I think definitely would be fair to start talking about what are we going to raise it to? I just think that where that curve ball was thrown and kind of hit right at like the worst time you could do it while you're trying to get people to sign contracts for this year. I think we need to just keep it where it's at out of fairness. I think this discussion next year as far as raising it, absolutely. I thought that last year before we knew that oh they're gonna come and pave Main Street like that, right? Originally they were going to pave Main Street in the spring and it wasn't going to be impacted. And then when that didn't happen, it was like no you can't because if you put the barrier down it needs five or six months to cure and all this stuff. So that's actually why they moved it. It's not that we didn't know Main Street was gonna get paved. It was that we thought it was gonna get paved in the spring before barriers went down but you can't do that because it would have set basically an indentation where all those barriers were.

So as far as the equitability, I think we should think more about that for next year for that. I don't know that there's a solution there that I would necessarily support but I certainly believe that it's a fair discussion. I think the other fair discussion or the other fair thing to do would be to go to those businesses and say if it was \$250 would you do it? Because if the answer is no, then there's no point in doing that at all, right? There's no point in even going down that road. We know what businesses they are so we can have that conversation like a hypothetical. So I would say that, that's where we should start with that.

Chairman Moran

Did you have a...?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

If I could Mr. Chair, I'd like to make just a brief comment and I won't say a word the rest of the night. Maybe I can't keep to that but a few things I just want to maybe call out. So I think, you know we're not through the season yet. The reason I want to bring that up is not only do we not have a full picture of the data if you will of utilization but I can say that I have had some one-on-one conversations with businesses, and I expect Director Hannum has as well, that are just not sure where they stand on this just yet. So I think its incumbent upon city staff to have an opportunity to actually engage with them and get real, albeit somewhat anecdotal, but real data about why they're choosing not to use the spaces. I think even on our end, we're assuming that its cost related but it may in fact be more complicated than that for them. Where they may you know they may be sharing space with another entity or there are other factors that are driving their decision making. I guess the toughest part for me to say is that some businesses have approached us to say I would do it but it's really, really hard for me. What do you want me to do? They want to have this active conversation with the City and of course, our primary response is you know we want you to do this but in some cases, there are mitigating circumstances. So I think it's important to have a clear picture of what those circumstances might be and then bring that information back to you in an anonymous form if you will to have a discussion but I think there are other factors and costs. I guess I would just say that to start.

The last thing I just want to say is that I do want to keep the end in mind to some extent here. We are actively working right now and we'll be bringing this forward soon. We are actively working on a Main Street conceptual redesign that will take a lot of this I'll call it tactical urbanism although tactical urbanism doesn't usually extend for multiple years. This tactical urbanism or piloting that we're doing and bring it forward in a more permanent form. So we'll definitely need to have a solution for the fees for the next year I would say because it's going to be a long time before we're able to move the construction forward. There will be a longer-term solution. Even in the conversations that we've had with businesses, we've been saying to them we understand it's challenging for you. We understand that maybe the customer base is not what it is today but help us understand as a community what having this more vibrant downtown space would be for your

business. When we say that, some businesses actually say okay, all right, I'd like to be a part of that conversation. May not want to write \$500 check just yet but I see where you're going with this and therefore maybe I am a little bit more supportive in writing that check if not this year, maybe the next year. So I've had some conversations with business. I expect that is what Director Hannum is going to be saying in a few minutes but they're open to talking about this more even the ones that have not putting anything out just yet.

Chairman Moran

Can we let Director Hannum...?

Alderman Thibeault

Can I just go into it because I was going to ask for her opinion as well?

Chairman Moran

Go ahead.

Alderman Thibeault

Because she's been patiently waiting. I agree with waiting. I think waiting longer does give us more data. I think that's important. I just wanted to say one thing. Alderman Jette had said this and I guess I don't understand it either, I kind of agree with him. \$500 seems like pretty cheap when you generate so much money just in one sitting. So I don't know. I'm not in the restaurant business. I've never worked in the restaurant business so I don't know where that kind of seems cheap if you're making a lot of money. I could be wrong on that.

But my last thing was I did want to hear if the Director had any experience in her former job with this, or in the past, and what her thoughts are too.

Chairman Moran

Thank you for being so patient.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Of course. Liz Hannum, Economic Development. Yes, so I've had a lot of experience with these both in communities pre-COVID and during COVID. They do bring a lot of vibrancy to the community. The businesses that I have spoken to in downtown right now not to add complexity but once you add retail to this scenario as well, they're not seeing any benefit to the barriers. However to your equity point, we could potentially incentivize the lunchtime if you know you have two meals, we can incentivize say we'll give you \$250 back at the end of the season if you've done something to help the retail businesses along the way or things like that, that we can help both retail and restaurant move forward.

But the communities that I've worked in before have all been very hesitant to put parklets or barriers out. However, they've all been beautiful and they work really well. They bring communities out. I would say we do have an esthetics problem with the concrete barrier but there might be a way to fix that in the future. Maybe not with artwork but with something else. I do think that that having that fee in place is important because whether it's to start out with and then they get kind of reimbursed as they do things that support the rest of the community but the skin in the game portion is really important for the businesses as we don't want to do things for the businesses. We want to do things with the businesses. So that that would be my response to the conversation around fee schedules and things like that.

Chairman Moran

Alderman Thibeault.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you. Question to the Director through you. So retail businesses that's one thing that I've thought a lot about as we were doing this because I have a constituent that owns a business there. We know very well the people who have retail businesses came pretty strongly not all of them but some did. One supported us and now it's out of business. So not barrier related but at the end of the day, it is tougher for the retail businesses but aren't a lot of those retail businesses like

8:00 to 5:00, 8:00 to 4:00 and so they're not - when they say they're not getting the benefit of it, the benefit really starts if you want traffic through your stores, you go to Boston. You go to like Porter Square or something. Everything's opened during the time the restaurants are to a certain extent, right? Not past midnight or anything but they're open when people are there and that's not happening. So they may get some lunch crowd but they're not going to get the dinner crowd if they're not open. Some might not even be open on weekends. I don't know but I think that kind of hurts them. I guess that's not their business model. They open during the day and that's what they want to do but if we had businesses open at night wouldn't we get that traffic or am I just overthinking this?

Chairman Moran

Director.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes, I agree. However, a lot of the businesses are one man shop kind of things. So it is a capacity issue for a lot of them. I know that the downtown association, Great American Downtown, is going to do a ladies night shopping where they all stay open late. I think there's also a perception issue that that they won't get the business if they stay open later. So we have to kind of show them that, that is a possibility. Those kind of ladies' nights one, you know, first Friday's kind of projects I think could be really beneficial in kind of proving the concept to them and maybe shifting their hours to the capacity.

I'm also hoping to work with the Nashua Regional Planning Council to use their data on pedestrian counts to help them make kind of real-time decisions on what their staffing looks like and prove to them that that maybe if they stay open two hours later, you know, open later, stay later that there is a possibility that they could catch some of that nighttime lunch or dinner crowd.

I think post-COVID, a lot of the restaurants have decided not to reopen for lunch and only for dinner. So I think they could have seen the benefit pre-COVID but are not seeing that as much during that lunchtime crowd. It does feel like a lot of the businesses are kind of - or the retail businesses are owned by people who have recently retired and are doing this as a second career. So it's kind of they're figuring it out but I think the more career style businesses will eventually see some of that data and make their own decisions based on that.

Alderman Thibeault

Follow up?

Chairman Moran

Yeah.

Alderman Thibeault

Yeah I mean that's what I was thinking too. I was like why don't you take a Thursday, Friday, Saturday, or something and shift your day? You're sleeping in a little bit...

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah.

Alderman Thibeault

...but you're getting the benefit of that. If it doesn't work, you move back or whatever. I mean the problem is the advertising, right? People have to know that those businesses are open at those times because people who want to go there might not go there. Now if there's walking traffic and they see it's open, they're gonna go in. I mean you obviously can't force people to give the hours of their business what we want them to be. It's gotta be what they want. I look at it and I go man they would certainly benefit from being open when the PAC is open at night when there are a lot of people are going up and down. I look for things. When I go to cities and I'm at a show or something and it's 10:00 and there's nothing to do or at 9:00, I'm walking around going can we go in here? Can we have a drink here? What's this a bookstore? Like I'm going in and seeing stuff. That's the kind of vibrancy we want in Nashua. We don't want like the PAC ends at 10:00 and everything's closed on a Friday night. You want the vibrancy. So yeah, I hope that stuff works

and I hope people are able to see that - sometimes the benefit may not be there but you got to go to the benefit. You got to go where the benefit is to reap that. If they're doing okay without it, then that's fine but then they're going to come to us and say the barriers aren't helping them. So that's the hard thing.

There were some people that had a hardened no. I don't want them there. They just get in my way. We did give some parking spaces back to a couple of businesses to kind of help them out and not put a barrier in front of their business but it would be good if we could generate more interest there.

Chairman Moran

It's always been a frustration of mine that feels after a certain hour downtown, especially on Friday and Saturday nights, I'm still a relatively young person and going out. I want to go to downtown Nashua. I don't want to go to Boston. I'm in that age group where I still want to be in a lively area but then still so many places close at like 9:30 - 10:00. So you're stuck with - well not stuck with. They're actually really good. I love Peddler's. Mike you were there and Casey McGee's. It's really fun but then you get like some restaurants aren't even open on Sunday. After the Memorial Day Parade, my wife and I went down to grab lunch and we thought we'd go to Odd Fellows. Closed and that was a holiday weekend. That Monday, yeah, so it's just trying to incentivize. Alderman Clemons.

Alderman Clemons

Yeah, so the restaurant environment where in Nashua where things are closed on Monday, and Tuesday, and some even Wednesday is in large part due to the fact that we don't have people coming to downtown during the week during the day. Most of the people that live in Nashua work outside of Nashua. So we're leaving the City to go to work and stuff like that. Compounding that problem is I don't know if you saw it today or the unemployment rate in New Hampshire is 1.9%. So there's nobody out there. You have tons of positions to fill. Some of these places would like to be open on Monday or Tuesday but they can't because they can't find anybody to work. It's not like this perception of, you know, nobody wants to work is annoying to me because it's like the unemployment rate has never been lower in this State. Never. So the fact that like, you know, people say oh well people don't want to work. Well maybe the 2% of the people that are there but I doubt it. There's other factors there.

We are in an economy that is very unusual right now where, you know, and we're going to see a change. I can tell you I'm in the lending market right now and we've slowed down tremendously compared to where we were last year. So the economy is definitely cooling off. I don't know how long that unemployment rates is going to stay low. I think we're in for turbulent times ahead but I think right now as things stand, we're in good shape but I don't see that changing the small businesses being closed on Monday, and Tuesday, and Wednesday in Nashua. I don't see that changing in the future. If anything, I see more of them going that way.

Chairman Moran

Which is unfortunate. Director.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

I think we can work on some incremental approaches to this problem whether it's just the nights that the PAC is open that we kind of work with the businesses to try to stay open and take advantage of or it's just Friday nights. So we can work on an incremental approach to try and get them to a place where they could potentially pick up one extra day or a lunchtime shift. So I feel like if we're working towards something, that incremental approach is going to be really important.

Chairman Moran

So I think if we could if we could ask - do we even need and make a motion on it?

Alderman Thibeault

No.

Chairman Moran

If we could ask you to take the discussion that we had here, connect with the Downtown Improvement Committee, and the Great American Downtown, other restaurants directly especially those that aren't utilizing the service, and retailers to see

how equitability conversation that we had can be impactful to their businesses. How they're doing right now regarding outdoor dining, if it's impactful or not, and just the general conversation what we what we had. We'll come back to readdress.

Alderman Thibeault

So thank you. Do we need a piece of legislation to keep it at \$500 next year? Obviously we're not going to create it tonight but...

Chairman Moran

Yes.

Alderman Thibeault

Because that's kind of what we talked about for next year, right because of the paving? Its one year I think, right?

Chairman Moran

Yeah.

Alderman Thibeault

We're gonna revisit it. So at some point this year, we're going to need legislation and I guess Economic Development Director would go to Legal and have that created for us to then come back here, and obviously debate that, and then eventually go to the Board of Aldermen. I don't know what time we need that by but we definitely want to make sure we're not as late to the game as we were last year.

Alderman Clemons

I mean ideally we would want to have that drafted before like by December. Well not drafted. We want it passed by December at the very, very latest. I would think that we would want to get this data first before we draft legislation so that we can have a discussion about what people are saying, then draft the legislation, and debate it. If I have my druthers, it's going to be \$500 just the way it was this year for one year again and then move it forward but.

Chairman Moran

Alderman Thibeault.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you. I think we probably should get it and start debating it probably in September at least. The only reason I say that is because if for some reason it gets pushed out, and pushed out, and we have a new Board starting January, that could completely change what we - I'd like to put that in place, make sure it gets in place by the end of December so that way we don't have that issue.

Chairman Moran

I did just say September.

Alderman Thibeault

Oh, you did? I'm with you then.

Alderman Clemons

Yeah. I think September is good to have either August or September is good to have this follow up discussion and then create the legislation after that but I don't think we should put the cart before the horse in this case.

Chairman Moran

I agree. Do you agree with that Director?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

I do.

Chairman Moran

All right. Any further discussion? All right. Well thank you both. I know Director Sullivan still chimed in even though it's not his department and I appreciate it.

TABLED IN COMMITTEE - None

GENERAL DISCUSSION - None

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

REMARKS BY ALDERMEN – None

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN THIBEAULT TO ADJOURN
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared closed at 8:17 p.m.

Alderman Derek Thibeault
Committee Clerk