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**LCP-3-CAP-21-0083 (PARKLETS)
JUNE 10, 2022 HEARING**

CORRESPONDENCE

October 11, 2021

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CALIFORNIA
COASTAL COMMISSION
CENTRAL COAST AREA

Ms. Susan Craig
District Manager
California Coastal Commission
725 Front Street, Suite 300
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Ms. Craig,

It has been my impression that The Coastal Commission has for years had a strong policy of not allowing the elimination of affordable beach front public parking in the coastal zone in the name of preserving coastal access for the public. For this reason it came as a shock to me that I have been told your staff has agreed to allow Capitola to convert 25 metered Village parking spaces to private additional dining space for select Village restaurants. This proposal creates approximately 4,000 sq. ft. of new bar and restaurant space which according to Capitola's LCP requires providing 66 parking spaces. Thus the cumulative negative impact on Village parking is 91 parking spaces. I fail to see how in any way this would be acceptable to the Commission.

It is my hope that upon further review your staff would not authorize allowing what was a temporary compassionate COVID accommodation to become such a permanent erosion of coastal access and good governance practices in Capitola. It negates years of hard work to create and maintain public parking in and around Capitola Village.

I have included below the text of my email to the City Council which details more fully my concerns with their proposal.

During most of my 44 years in Capitola I have been committed (Traffic and Parking Commissioner, various Blue Ribbon task forces) to trying to preserve the delicate balance between parking for Village residents, merchants and visitors alike and inappropriate development pressures (bigger, higher, denser). With its new Dining In The Street proposal the City Council in one giant leap sweeps aside all those efforts by permanently adding approximately 4,000 sq ft of new bar and dining space in the Village and moving bar and restaurant operations (with its attendant aesthetic, behavioral and noise impacts) into on street public parking spaces. I say "permanently" because I can't recall when the Council has made a major temporary concession to private businesses and subsequently terminated it. So let's call it what it is – permanent. Any semi-informed observer of city hall knows that you are going to make this move regardless of its negative impacts. The best we can hope for is that you craft a fair, well designed and carefully enforced Dining In The Street program to mitigate the clear threat to Village aesthetics and quality of life for Village residents.

By far the most serious long range negative impact of your plan is its negative impact on Village parking. By the City's own guidelines for parking loads each 60 sq ft of bar and dining operations requires one parking space. Hence 4,000 sq ft of new space creates a parking demand for 66 spaces. When coupled with the loss of 25 existing spaces In Street Dining will negatively impact Village parking and coastal access by 91 parking spaces. This is a serious set back for the Village

and greatly reduces any latitude for future needed programs and desired development in the Village which would require modest parking loss or shortfall. Cynics might point out that what you refer to as "Capping" the loss of 25 parking spaces is in actuality your structuring it as a "Sales Goal" wherein you even resort to a lottery system to make sure you lease every one of the 25 spaces come hell or high water. For me every single one of those 25 spaces you can preserve is a win-win for the Village and for coastal access. For that reason I urge you to actually "Cap" the maximum number of spaces per business at two spaces and that the lessee pays for all parking spaces which are encroached upon and made unusable for car parking by the design of each dining deck.

It is clear that the prototype design for the dining deck is going to be critical to the success of your program from both an aesthetic as well as a cost point of view. There need to be prototype designs for both parallel and diagonal parking zone applications to insure maximum utilization of the assigned parking space and no impact on adjacent parking spaces. The safety of diners is also a paramount design consideration. At a minimum the perimeter structure needs to be sufficiently robust to withstand the common scrapes and bumps of parking and passing cars and trucks. In this regard Dining in the Street should not be allowed on Capitola Avenue. This is completely inappropriate on such a busy arterial street and would be an unsafe distraction for passing motorists. This is a no-brainer safety imperative.

Don't lower the standard of the prototype design to be as cheap (and ugly) as possible to enable every under-capitalized bar and restaurant buy into this problematic program.

In view of the critical importance of the design of the dining decks, development of the prototype designs should properly be done BEFORE passing the ordinance in order for citizens' design and safety concerns be fully vetted via a public process to determine how effectively the Council has addressed the many challenges of this program. Currently it sounds as if the Council wants to create a problematic ordinance then let staff sort out the difficult details with no public process.

The design also must have a far higher aesthetic standard than the Do-It-Yourself Food Court operations which you have allowed to date. It is a poorly maintained blight on our special Village. You can and should do better.

This proposed program is the most preferential and inequitable windfall for Village bars and restaurants that I can recall. This conversion to private commercial use of public metered parking spaces for the rock bottom price of simply re-imbursing the City for the lost parking meter revenue (\$3,400/space/year) is practically a gift of public funds. This approximates a lease rate of \$19/sq ft/year. Comparable commercial space in the village leases for \$48/sqft/year and up. Other merchants and Village residents must absorb the negative impact of lost parking. One glimmer of good business sense would be for the City to require all rent, fees and deposits be payable IN ADVANCE in order that problem Lessees can be promptly identified and dealt with so that the parking space can be returned to public use.

Noise in the street is an ongoing issue for Village residents. Getting enforcement support is challenging. For this reason NO MUSIC (amplified or otherwise) should be allowed outside on the dining decks. Keep it inside the bars and restaurants. This is a simple rule that is easily enforced.

In the early days of "parklets" the concept was that these were basically small parks to which the general public had access to use and enjoy. I assume that is why they use the benign term "parklets". Somewhere along the way they have morphed into private property, chained off from public access. Parklet indeed.

Thank you, Ms. Craig , for your attention to this lengthy letter.

Very truly yours,



Nels Westman

507 Riverview Drive
Capitola, CA 95010