

A Public Hearing was called to order on September 1, 2020 for all interested citizens wishing to discuss Ordinance 2020-38, an ordinance creating a designated outdoor refreshment area (DORA) and establishing requirements to ensure public health and safety within such area and declaring an emergency.

President Steve Henderson called the meeting to order at 6:00pm on September 1, 2020 in the Downtown Parkway, next to 16 E. Auglaize Street, with the following members present: Ross Kantner, Brandon Miller, Chad Doll, Rodney Metz, Terry Campbell, Chad Dunlap, Mayor Thomas Stinebaugh and Safety Service Director Floyd Gregg. There were 29 visitors present. Daniel E. Lee and Law Director Grant Neal were absent.

Mr. Chad Doll provided the group with a brief explanation and summary of the proposed DORA project and proper steps involved. Mr. Doll noted the concerns already raised about the program, such as possible vandalism, public drunkenness and litter, but research found that surrounding cities with a DORA in place have not seen an increase in these behaviors. Mr. Doll added that if implemented, the DORA program would be re-evaluated by City Council and Administration at regular intervals to ensure its success and address any problems. Mr. Doll also noted that area businesses can choose to 'opt-out' of participation in the program if they wish.

Wapakoneta Chamber of Commerce Director, Jackie Martell, stated that sales from the DORA program have saved many businesses from closing their doors completely due to the coronavirus pandemic. Ideal communities for a DORA would be those who have restaurants near retail establishments and green space.

Clerk Terry McDonald summarized a letter received from Tammy Brown of Mercy Unlimited. Mrs. Brown stated that Mercy Unlimited is not in favor of the DORA legislation due to multiple issues and concerns it would create. Additionally, Mercy Unlimited would not allow participants of the program to enter their establishment with an alcoholic beverage.

Mr. Stephen Ambrose of Winans Chocolates & Coffee and resident of 24½ E. Auglaize Street read his own letter of opposition to the proposed DORA legislation, listing noise, litter, and possible illegal refilling of DORA cups as main concerns. Mr. Ambrose reminded the group that there have been recent fatal accidents with pedestrians crossing the railroad tracks downtown and the safety of the DORA parameters should be addressed.

Councilman Terry Campbell added his concern about liability issues regarding sidewalks. Mayor Stinebaugh stated that the City is liable for downtown sidewalks.

Mr. Aaron Holtz of 1112 Timber Trail and owner of Municipal Brew Works voiced his experience with the DORA program, noting that it saved his business during the coronavirus pandemic and restrictions. Mr. Holtz further explained the rules and procedure of the DORA that he is familiar with, adding that there were no issues and only positive outcomes from his perspective.

Mrs. Jessica Muhlenkamp of 508 E. Pearl Street provided articles about the success of DORA in area communities and stated that if Wapakoneta does not participate it will be losing tax payer dollars. Mrs. Muhlenkamp also stated that many existing DORA communities have decided to expand their parameters after trying out the program.

Mr. Jason Neumeier of 825 Helen Drive and employee of TSC in Wapakoneta, voiced his support of the DORA program in Wapakoneta. Mr. Neumeier stated that the program is geared toward shoppers and keeping people downtown. Mr. Neumeier added that the City of Wapakoneta could take a leadership role and show that DORA can be implemented responsibly.

Mrs. Melissa Henderson of 718 W. Auglaize explained that her friends and family would be in support of the program so that they could enjoy an adult beverage and continue their shopping at local stores in the downtown.

Mrs. Jaime Metzger of 107 W. Auglaize noted that she has experienced a DORA community firsthand and did not witness any issues or matters of concern. As a shop owner, Mrs. Metzger explained that patrons may be willing to stay longer and loosen their purse strings if they are permitted to have an adult beverage while shopping.

Mrs. Landa Tomlinson of 22188 Moulton Ft. Amanda Road and owner of Casa Chic in downtown Wapakoneta voiced her support of the program, noting that patrons already carry cups of coffee and other beverages into her store without issue.

Councilman Chad Doll summarized the meeting and advised that the final reading and vote on Ord 2020-38 will occur on September 21st and encouraged citizens to contact councilmembers with their opinion and input on the matter.

Motion by Doll, second by Dunlap to adjourn at 6:44pm. Vote – 6 yeas, 0 nays.

President

Clerk of Council