



April 18, 2024

Chair Libby Garvey
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Garvey,

On behalf of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, I express our support for the proposed Minor Site Plan Amendment concerning the sidewalk clearance at 1051 North Highland Street in Clarendon, which is Item 2 on the April 20 County Board agenda. We are pleased to see that this was included on the Consent Agenda, and we hope to see that it is passed without controversy.

The Chamber strongly supported the adoption of the new outdoor dining standards adopted last summer. We appreciated the inclusion of allowing outdoor dining by right, provided that restaurants ensure at least six feet of sidewalk space and other conditions.

Smokecraft Modern Barbecue, the applicant, is requesting that their outdoor dining spaces be in line with the county-wide standard. The restaurant, like many in Arlington, relied heavily on revenue from outdoor dining over the past three and a half years. As restaurants continue to navigate the post-pandemic challenges in increased food costs and labor shortages, it is crucial that Arlington allows its restaurants to continue their outdoor dining operations in a standardized manner.

Many of our restaurants in Arlington are in buildings with site plans, and this issue is unlikely to be isolated to Smokecraft Modern Barbecue. The Chamber encourages the County to streamline the processing of minor site plan amendments of this kind and consider adjusting this process to one that requires an administrative site plan amendment instead, in order to ensure that the new County-wide outdoor dining rules have their intended effect. It is important for restaurants, which have developed such a positive use of outdoor space since the beginning of the pandemic, for this process to be streamlined in some fashion going forward.

We ask that the County Board adopt this minor site plan amendment. We thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Bates". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Bates
President & CEO

CC: County Board Vice-Chair Takis Karantonis; County Board Members Maureen Coffey, Susan Cunningham, and Matt De Ferranti; County Manager Mark Schwartz; CPHD Director Samia Byrd; Planning Director Anthony Fusarelli.